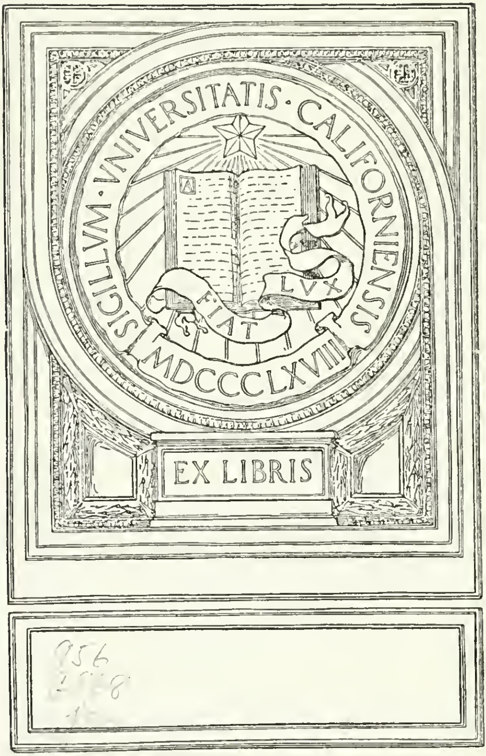
JACK IN THE ROCKIES

GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL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JACK IN THE ROCKIES

By the same Author

JACK THE YOUNG COWBOY
JACK THE YOUNG TRAPPER
JACK THE YOUNG CANOEMAN
JACK THE YOUNG EXPLORER
JACK IN THE ROCKIES
JACK AMONG THE INDIANS
JACK THE YOUNG RANCHMAN
PAWNEE HERO STORIES AND FOLK TALES
BLACKFOOT LODGE TALES
THE STORY OF THE INDIAN
THE INDIANS OF TO-DAY
THE PUNISHMENT OF THE STINGY
AMERICAN DUCK SHOOTING
AMERICAN GAME BIRD SHOOTING
TRAILS OF THE PATHFINDERS

"THROWING HIS GUN TO HIS SHOULDER HE FIRED AT THE ANIMAL."—*Page 221*

JACK
IN THE ROCKIES

OR

A BOY'S ADVENTURES WITH A PACK TRAIN

BY

GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL

Author of "Jack the Young Ranchman," "Jack Among the Indians," "Pawnee Hero Stories," "Blackfoot Lodge Tales," "The Story of the Indian," "The Indian of To-Day," Etc.

Illustrated by

EDWIN WILLARD DEMING

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FOREWORD

AT the time Jack Danvers journeyed through the Yellowstone National Park, that wonderful country was little known. Since then it has become famous, and people from all parts of the globe go to visit it. There is no more delightful summer excursion possible than a trip to the National Park where — if one can take a pack train and journey away from the beaten roads and trails — it is still possible to see elk and deer and many other wild animals, almost in their old time abundance.

In the spring of 1903 President Roosevelt did just this, and on his return wrote a most interesting article about what he saw, telling of the abundance of the elk, the familiarity of the deer, the shyness of the antelope and the tameness of the mountain sheep.

American boys and girls are happy in having in their own country so lovely and so marvelous a region.

Jack in the Rockies

CHAPTER I

THE INDIANS OF FORT BERTHOLD

WITH noisy puffings the steamboat was slowly pushing her way up the river. On either side the flat bottom, in some places overgrown with high willow brush, in others, bearing a growth of tall and sturdy cotton-woods, ran back a long way to the yellow bluffs beyond. The bluffs were rounded and several hundred feet in height, rising imperceptibly until they seemed to meet the blue of the sky, so that the boat appeared to be moving at the bottom of a wide trough. Hour after hour she pushed on, meeting nothing, seeing nothing alive, except now and then a pair of great gray geese, followed by their yellow goslings; or sometimes on the shore a half-concealed red object, which moved quickly out of sight, and which observers knew to be a deer.

On the boat were two of our old friends. From the far East had come Jack Danvers, traveling day after day until he had reached Bismarck, Dakota, where he found awaiting him Hugh Johnson, as grave, as white-haired, and as cheery as ever. At

Bismarck they had taken the up-river steamer, "Josephine," and the boat had sailed early on the morning of July 5th.

Hugh and Jack were on their way back up to the Piegan country. They had separated at Bismarck the previous autumn, and while Hugh kept on down the river, to take a west-bound train, which should carry him back to Mr. Sturgis' ranch in Wyoming, Jack had gone East, to spend the winter in New York. He had had a year of hard work at school, for his experience of the previous winter had taught him that it paid well to work in school, and to make the most of his opportunities there. This made his parents more willing to have him go away to this healthful life, and he found that if he did his best he enjoyed all the better the wild, free life of the prairie and the mountains, which he now hoped would be his during a part, at least, of every year.

His summer with the Piegans had taught him many things known to few boys in the East, and given him many pleasures to which they are strangers; and the more he saw of this prairie life the more he enjoyed it, and the more he hoped to have more and more of it. Sometimes, when he awoke early in the morning, or at night, after he had gone to bed, as he lay between sleeping and waking, he used to go over in his mind the scenes that he had visited, and the stirring adventures in which he had taken part, and these memories, with the hope of others like them, gave him a pleasure that he would not have parted with for anything.

Often when he was in New York, walking through

narrow city streets, looking up at high buildings, hearing the roar and rattle of the passing traffic, and watching the people hurry to and fro, each one absorbed in his own business, it was hard to realize that away off somewhere, only a few days' journey distant, there was a land where there was no limit to the view, where each human being seemed absolutely free, and where it was possible to travel for days and days without seeing a single person. Always interwoven with his dreams and his imaginings about this distant country was the memory of the friend Hugh, to whom he was so deeply attached. It hardly seemed to him possible to go anywhere in the West, except in company with Hugh, and until he had joined him, it never seemed as if his journey had begun, or was really going to be made.

All through the day the boat went on, turning and twisting, and at different times facing all points of the compass. Sometimes the sun would be shining on the port side of the boat, a little later on the starboard side, then it would be ahead, and again behind. Hugh and Jack spent their time chatting on the upper deck of the boat, Hugh smoking vigorously, to keep off the mosquitoes, while Jack, the edges of his handkerchief under his hat and tucked inside his coat collar, to leeward of Hugh, took advantage of the constant stream of smoke that poured from his pipe. They had much to tell each other of the winter that had passed, and much to say of the trip on which they were now starting. Fort Benton was their destination, and until they reached there, and saw their friend Joe, the Blackfoot Indian who was to

meet them with the horses, they were uncertain what they should do.

There were not a few passengers on the boat. Some of them were carefully dressed persons, wearing long frock coats, white shirts, and a modest amount of jewelry, residents of the thriving towns of Helena or Virginia City, Montana; others were army officers, on their way to posts in the Northwest, or now starting out on some exploring expedition; while others still were persons of whose occupation and destination it was hard to judge from their appearance.

Among them was a middle-aged man who Jack thought, from his conversation, had long been a resident of the plains, and who told Jack something about a trade that he had long practised — that of wolfing.

"Why, young fellow," he said, "it is only a few years ago since there was good money in wolfin', but I had to quit it down in the southern country for wolves got too scarce when the buffalo got killed off. Wherever there was buffalo there was plenty of wolves, for the wolves made their livin' off the herds, just like the Indians; and when I say wolves I mean big wolves, coyotes, foxes, and swifts.

"In the autumn, as soon as the fur began to get good, I used to start out and find a herd of buffalo, and after shootin' two or three of them, I'd skin them down, and rip them up, and put from one to three bottles of strychnine in each carcass. After the blood that lay in the ribs had been poisoned good, I'd smear that over the meat on the outside.

Generally I'd try to kill my buffalo close to where I was goin' to camp, and after I had put out my baits I went to camp and slept until near day. Then, before I could see, I'd get up, cook my breakfast, hitch up, if I had a team, and go round to all my baits. Likely, around each one I'd find my half dozen to fifteen wolves, and sometimes it would take me two or three days to skin them. Likely enough, if the weather turned right cold, I got a good many more wolves than I could skin, and had to stack them up, and wait till I got time. It was mighty hard work now, and don't you forget it. Then, too, there was always a chance that Indians might come along and make trouble for me. You take a man out on the prairie, ten years ago, and even the friendly Indians were likely to scare him a whole lot, or take his hides, even if they didn't take away his gun and his horses. As for the hostiles, if they got too close to a man it was all up with him. But I never had no trouble with them, except once, and then I was camped in the dug-out, with plenty of provisions, and there was only three of the Indians. I saw them comin', and suspected who they were, and managed to get my horses into the dug-out with me and stood 'em off. They scared me bad though.

"I should think so," said Jack.

The man stopped talking to fill his pipe and after he had lighted it puffed thoughtfully. Then he continued: "There's another way I've wolfed it, and that is by draggin' a bait over quite a scope of country, and droppin' pieces of poisoned meat along the trail. I used to do that when I couldn't find

animals to kill for bait. This worked pretty well for awhile but it's no good any more down in that country."

"I've seen coyotes killed by putting poisoned tallow in auger holes, bored in chunks of wood," said Jack.

"Yes," said the man, "that's good sometimes, and they stay there lickin' and lickin' up the bait until they die right there. You don't have to look over much country to find your wolves."

"What kind of meat did you use when you were dragging the bait?" asked Jack.

"Most any kind would do," replied the wolfer; "sometimes it would be a piece of buffalo meat, sometimes a shoulder of a deer, but the best bait of all is a beaver carcass; there's lots of grease and lots of smell to that, and the wolves and coyotes are sure to follow it. This draggin' a trail is good too, because the wolves, when they go along and snap up the poisoned bait, don't go off, but keep right on followin' the trail, and you find them there, maybe quite a long way from where they pick the bait.

"Where are you goin', young fellow; you and that old man I see you talking with?"

"We're going up to Benton," said Jack, "and I don't know where we're going from there. I expect we'll meet a friend there, with our horses, and then we're going to make a trip, off maybe on the prairies, and maybe into the mountains; we can't tell yet."

"Sho," said the man, "you're sure goin' to have a good time. I've got to get a job when I get to Benton; somethin' that'll keep me until it comes time for fur to get good."

The next morning when Jack and Hugh left their stateroom a heavy fog hung low over the river and the boat was not moving, but was tied up to the bank, for it was so thick that there was danger of running aground on the frequent sand-bars, and as the river was now falling, the captain was unwilling to take the chance of such delay. On the lower deck was a dug-out canoe, the property of a temporary passenger, who was going only to Fort Berthold, and, after breakfast, Jack suggested to Hugh that they should borrow this canoe and go off a little way up the river, taking their guns, and seeing whether they could kill anything. Hugh said this could not be done, explaining that it would be easy enough to get lost, which would be bad for them, and very irritating to the captain, who might feel it necessary to wait for them; and besides this, the fog might lift at any moment, when the boat would move onward much faster than they could paddle. As it happened, the fog lifted almost immediately, and the boat set forward; and a little before noon the village of the Rees, Gros Ventres and Mandans, high up on the bluff above the river, was seen; and soon after the boat tied up, and all hands went ashore.

The bluff rose steeply from the river, and up and down its face were steep trails, worn by the feet of women passing up and down as they carried water and the driftwood which they gathered, up to the village. On the top of the bluff stood the beehive shaped gray houses, which Hugh told Jack were much like those occupied by the Pawnees.

They began to climb the bluff toward the village,

and Jack asked Hugh about the Indians who lived here.

"In old times," said Hugh, "these Indians were scattered out up and down the river. The Gros Ventres lived furthest up, between here and Buford, and the Rees and Mandans lived further down the stream. A long time ago, — back maybe more than a hundred years, — the Rees and the Mandans all lived together, away down below here; but then they had some sort of a quarrel among themselves, and the Mandans moved on up the stream, and for a long time camped near the mouth of the Knife River. For a while after that there was some fighting between the Rees and Mandans, but after a time they made peace, and gradually the tribes came together again; and now for a long time they've all lived together in this village of Berthold. In old times each of these villages was a big one, but since the white men came among them, and brought smallpox, and liquor, and all the other things that the white men bring, they are dying off fast, and I don't believe that now there is more than eight or nine hundred of these Indians all together. You know these Rees here are kind of kin to the Pawnees; they speak near the same language, so that I can talk with 'em, and they call the Pawnees their relations. I think they used to be a part of the Skidi band. Nobody knows just when they separated from the Pawnees, but it must have been a good while ago."

Hugh paused, and Jack asked: "Does any one know how they came to separate, Hugh? Is there any tradition about it?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "there is. The old story is that all the Pawnees were out hunting, and the Sioux got around some of 'em, and cut 'em off from the rest, and kept fighting 'em, and driving 'em, and fighting and driving, until they got 'em away up on the Missouri River, so far from their friends that they had to winter there. Then, along back, maybe about 1830, soon after the beginning of the fur trade on the upper river, the Rees fought the white folks, and were generally hostile. After that they went back and joined the Pawnees, but they could n't get along well with the Pawnees, and quarreled with them, and finally the Pawnees drove 'em off. So they came on back up the river. It was after that that they joined the Mandans, and they've lived together ever since."

By this time they had reached the top of the bluff, and were now close to the houses, on whose curious domed roofs many people were sitting,— women busy with their work, young men wrapped in their robes, and looking off into the distance, and little girls playing with their dolls or their puppies. The ground in the village all about the houses was worn bare by the passage of many feet; Indians were going to and fro, women carrying water and wood, men naked, or wrapped in their summer sheets, little boys chasing each other, or, with their ropes trying to snare the dogs, which were usually too cunning for them.

Jack was greatly interested in the houses, and wished to look into one, and to this Hugh said there would be no objection. The entrance of each house was by a long passage-way, closed above, and at the sides, and passing through this, they found them-

selves at the door. Jack expected to go into a room that was dark; but this was not so. Above the center of the large room was a wide open space, which answered both for chimney and for window. About the fireplace, which was under the smoke hole, at the corners of a square, stood four stout posts, reaching up to and supporting the rafters of the roof. The floor of the house was swept clean, and all around the walls were raised platforms, serving for beds, and separated by screens of straight willow sticks strung on sinew, from the adjacent bed on either side. In front of some of the beds similar screens hung down like curtains so that the bed could be cut off from the observation of those in the house. Over the fireplace hung a pot, and two pleasant-faced women were sitting near it, sewing moccasins. They looked up pleasantly, as the strangers stood in the doorway, and Hugh spoke a few words to them, to which they made some answer. Then the strangers withdrew.

Keeping on through the village, they walked out on the higher prairie, toward the tribal burying-ground, but not such a burying-ground as Jack was accustomed to see. Here were placed the dead, wrapped up in bundles, on platforms raised on four poles, eight or ten feet above the ground. Evidently no attention was paid to them after burial, for many of the poles which supported the platforms had rotted and fallen down, and, in the older part of the graveyard the ground was strewn with pieces of old robes and clothing, and with white bones.

Hugh told Jack that farther away, and down on

lower ground, where the soil was moist, the Rees, Mandans, and Gros Ventres had farms, where they raised corn, beans, pumpkins, and squashes, and that in old times they used to raise tobacco.

It was now time to return to the boat, for the wait was to be only a short one, and on their way back he told of something that had happened not many years before in the Mandan village.

"The people were hungry," said Hugh, "and there was no food in camp. They sent young men off in all directions to look for buffalo, but none could be found. As the people grew hungrier and hungrier the White Cow Society made up their minds that they would give a dance, and try to bring the buffalo. They did this, and danced for a long time; but no buffalo were found, and there were no signs that any were coming. Still the people of the White Cow Society danced, and still the other people watched them, and prayed that they might bring the buffalo. One day, after they'd danced for ten days, suddenly a big noise was heard in the village, and when the people rushed out of the lodges to see what was happening, there, among the lodges, was a big buffalo bull, charging about right close to the lodge in which the White Cow Society were dancing. All the dogs in the village seemed to be about him, barking at his head, and biting at his heels, and he was trying only to get away, and paying no attention to the Indians that were all about him.

"Then everybody was glad, for all could see that the Master of Life had sent this bull, to answer their prayers; and all believed that he had come ahead of

the main herd, which would soon follow him. Before he had got out of the village, the bull was shot. The White Cow Society came out of their lodge, and danced around the village, and while they were doin' this, one of the scouts came in, and reported that a big band of cows was not far off. Then everybody was glad, and all wondered at the strong medicine of the White Cow Society. The next day the men went out and made a surround, and killed plenty of cows, and brought in the meat, and there came a terrible storm, and when the storm cleared off the whole prairie, beyond the ridge near Knife River, was black with buffalo. Now there was plenty in the camp, and every one was happy. The men went out and brought in fat meat, and it was dried, and no more that winter was there any suffering for food."

"That's a good story, Hugh," said Jack, "but do you suppose the dancing of the White Cow Society really brought the buffalo?"

"I couldn't tell you, son. The Indians believed it did, but I don't suppose any white folks would. But I've seen so many queer things follow these medicine performances that I don't know what to think about them, myself."

By this time they had reached the shore, and looking around, as they passed over the gang-plank to the deck, they saw the captain and purser coming down the trail just behind them. The deck hands were already beginning to cast off the fasts, and a moment later the whistle sounded, the boat's nose turned out into the river, and the steady thump, thump of the paddle-wheel began again. On the bank

stood the three or four white men belonging to the agency, and up and down the bottom, and clustered in little groups on the bluffs, were Indians, dressed in buckskin, or in bright-colored cloth, who stood motionless, watching the steamer as she slowly moved away.

"That's a mighty interesting place, Hugh; and I want to get you to tell me all about it. Who are the Gros Ventres, and who are the Mandans? You've told me about the Rees, but I want to know about the others."

"Well, son," said Hugh, "I don't know as I can tell you very much about them, but I'll try. The Gros Ventres are close relations to the Crows; in fact, many people call them the River Crows, to distinguish them from the real Crows, that live up close to the mountains, on the head of the Yellowstone. Those fellows are called the Mountain Crows, and there's a good many more of them than there are of these. These people, I suppose, got their name, Gros Ventres, from the French, and I never heard why it was given to 'em. I never could see that they were any fatter, or had any bigger bellies, than other Indians, and I never found out any reason for the name. They don't call themselves by any such name as that; their name for themselves is *Hi dăt sa*, and that's said to mean, willows. Anyhow, they used to be called Willow Indians; so I have been told.

"In old times, they say that there were three tribes of them, but the other tribes have been lost, or forgotten, and now they're all together — all one bunch of Indians. There's one thing you want to remember,

that there are two different outfits of Indians, both called Gros Ventres; one of them, these people here, whom we know as the Gros Ventres of the Village, or Gros Ventres of the Missouri; the others are the Gros Ventres of the Prairie, whose country is east of the Blackfoot country, and who used to be friendly with the Blackfeet, and then fought them for a long time, and now are friendly again. Those Gros Ventres of the Prairie are no kin at all to these people, but are a part of the Arapahoes, from whom, according to the old story, they split off a long, long time ago. They talk the Arapahoe language, and call the Arapahoes their own people, and still visit them back and forth. Nowadays they have an agency along with the Assinaboines, further west, at Fort Belknap, over on Milk River. Ninety-nine men out of every hundred get these Arapahoes and these River Crows mixed up, just for the reason that the French called them both Gros Ventres. Don't you ever do that, because when a man makes that mistake it shows that he don't know nothing about Indians. Try to remember that, will you?"

"Of course I will, Hugh. I don't want to make any mistakes, especially now since I have been out and seen something of real Indians. People back East, and especially all the fellows at school, think that I know everything about Indians now. They're all the time asking me questions about them; who they are, and where they live, and I should hate to make any mistakes in my answers. Now tell me, who are the Mandans?"

"I don't know as much about the Mandans as I do

about the Gros Ventres of the Village," said Hugh, "and yet I've heard a lot about them. They're a kind of queer people; lots of 'em used to have yellow hair and gray eyes, and lots of 'em now have gray-haired children, same as you have seen among the Blackfeet. I got hold of a book once with lots of pictures of Indians in it; mighty good pictures, too, they were. 'T was written by a man named Catlin, who came up the river, painting pictures of Indians, a long time ago; maybe fifty years. He said he thought the Mandans were Welshmen, and told some story about some foreign prince that brought a colony of Welshmen over here, and Catlin thought that maybe the Mandans were descended from that colony. Anyhow they've lived by themselves, so the story goes, for a great many years; but I've heard the old men say that long, long ago the tribe came from away back East somewhere. They followed down a big river that ran from east to west, likely it may have been the Ohio River, until they came to the Mississippi, and then they struck off northwest, and camped on the Missouri, and they have been traveling up the Missouri, a little way at a time, for an almighty sight o' years.

"This book of Catlin's that I tell you about has got a whole lot o' stuff about the Mandans, and it is mighty good readin'. You had better get hold of it sometime when you get back East; it'll tell you more about 'em than I can. The Mandans have always been farmers, and raised good crops of corn, and that and their buffalo give them a pretty good living. But now the buffalo are getting scarce, and when

they give out the Mandans will have to live on straight corn, I am afraid. There's one thing about the Mandans that's worth rememberin', they make the best pots of any people that I know of on the plains. I expect that in old times maybe the Pawnees made just as good pots, but since the white folks began to bring brass and copper kettles into the country the Pawnees have forgotten how to make pots; but the Mandans still keep it up, and make some pots, big and little ——"

"Oh, Hugh!" called Jack at this moment, "Look at the buffalo!" and he pointed toward the high bluffs on the south side of the river, and there were three dark spots, running as hard as they could up the hill.

"Sure enough," said Hugh, "there's the first buffalo we've seen. Don't they look like three rats scuttling off over the hills, as fast as they can go. Before long, now, we ought to see plenty of 'em along the river; though we ain't likely to see many buffalo before we get above Buford."

The boat pushed slowly up the river's muddy current, and Hugh and Jack continued to talk about the Indian village on the hill.

"A mighty queer thing happened once at that village, son," said Hugh. You've heard, maybe, that in some tribes of Indians they have sort of prophets, or men that foretell things that are going to happen. I have seen a little of that sort of thing myself, that I never could explain. Besides that, they've got some way of learning news that we don't understand anything about. Of course it may not be as quick as

railroads and telegraphs, but its quick. Let me tell you something that happened there at Berthold, some years ago, and the man that it happened to lives in the upper country now, and you may likely run across him some time when you are up there. He is a Dutchman, and his name is Joe Butch.

"Along in 1868, Joe was working at Berthold, for a trader there, and the trader got into some sort of a quarrel about a horse with old White Cow, chief of the Mandans, and I guess old White Cow was pretty sassy, and maybe he threatened to do something, and Joe killed him. Well, as soon as he had killed the old man, Joe he knew that that wasn't no place for him, because the Mandans would be pretty sure to kill him; so he hops onto his horse, and rides as hard as he could for Buford, that's eighty miles up the river, next place we stop at. When he got to Buford he found there a big camp of Assinaboines, and they were having a big dance, because the chief of the Mandans, their enemies, had just been killed. Now, how do you suppose those Assinaboines knew that White Cow had been killed? Joe did n't waste no time getting onto his horse, and he rode as hard as he could to Buford; and its a sure thing that nobody got there before him with the news. I never understood how they found that out, and I never expect to."

"That seems a wonderful thing, Hugh," said Jack. "I don't see how they could have found it out if nobody told them, and if there were no telegraphs."

"Well, it's sure there were no telegraphs," said Hugh, "and I don't see how anybody could have

told them. Joe killed the man, and started on his ride right off, and had a good horse. That's one of the things that always beat me."

The hours passed swiftly by for Jack and Hugh, as they watched the river banks on either side. The boat had met a flood of water just above Berthold, which, if it made progress against the strong current more slow, nevertheless saved time by deepening the water, so that they did not run aground on sand-bars. Several times during the morning, antelope were seen feeding in the bottom, lifting their heads to gaze at the boat, as it puffed and snorted along, but not being enough alarmed to take to flight. After supper that night, as they sat on the deck about sundown, Hugh, watching the banks, pointed out no less than three distant spots on the wide bottom, which he told Jack were bears digging roots. They were a long way off, yet with his glasses Jack was able to make out their forms, and to recognize them as bears.

CHAPTER II

THE BATTLE OF THE MUSSELSHELL

EARLY next morning the boat stopped at Fort Buford, above the mouth of the Yellowstone River.

The wait was to be only a short one, and no one left the boat. Jack was interested in looking from the upper deck at the post, where there were a number of soldiers, and it looked like a busy place. Away to the left was seen the broad current of the Yellowstone coming down between timbered banks. As the two friends sat on the upper deck and looked off toward the shore, Hugh, in response to some question by Jack, said:

"Yes, in old fur-trading days this used to be a mighty interesting place. Just above here was one of the great trading posts of old times, and pretty much all the tribes of the northern prairie used to come here to get their ammunition, and whatever other stuff they could buy. Old man Culbertson was here for a long time, and lots of people from back east and from foreign parts used to come up the river as far as this. Sometimes they used to have great fights out here on this flat, when two hostile tribes would come in to trade and would get here at the same time. I've heard great stories about the way the Indians used to fight here among themselves almost under the walls of the post; and, then, again, sometimes the

Indians used to crawl up as near to the fort as they could, and try to run off the horse herd, which would be feeding right out in front of the post. Sometimes they'd get 'em; sometimes they would n't, but would get one of the herders. On the whole, however, the place was n't often attacked, because the Indians could n't afford to quarrel with the people who furnished them with their goods. When 'twas Fort Union, 'twas a mighty lively place."

"Why Hugh," said Jack, "do you mean to tell me that this is old Fort Union?"

"Sure," said Hugh.

"Why," said Jack, "I've read lots about Fort Union. Don't you know that in 1843 Audubon, the naturalist, and a party of his friends, came up here to find out a lot about the Western birds and animals? I've read a lot of Audubon, and he speaks constantly of Fort Union, and about the things he used to see here, and the buffalo hunting, and about Mr. Culbertson. Dear me! dear me! when I was reading about it I never thought that I would see Fort Union."

Well," said Hugh, "this is the place; and if this man Audubon was out here in 1843, that, I think, was just the year before they had the big smallpox here. Men that were here at the time tell me that there were two or three big camps of Indians here, and that they got the smallpox in the fall, just before the ground froze, and the Indians died off like wolves about a poisoned carcass; and the ground was hard, and they could not dig graves for them, and they just stacked up the bodies outside of the fort, in rows, like so much cord-wood, and had to wait till the ground

melted in the spring before they could bury 'em. There must have been a pile of Indians died."

"Well, what did they do for smallpox, Hugh? How did they cure themselves?"

"Why, they didn't know anything about curing themselves, son. When a man got smallpox, or got sick, he just went into a sweat-lodge, and took a sweat, and came out and plunged into the river to cool off, and the ice was running, and some of 'em never came up again, and some of those that did come up were so weak from the shock that they could not get to the shore, and just drowned. If we get to the Blackfoot camp this summer, you ask old man Chouquette about it. He was here then; he'll tell you about it, just the same as he told me."

While Hugh had been talking, the boat had cast off and had once more started up the river.

It was afternoon, and Hugh was dozing in his chair, tilted up against the cabin, while Jack as usual was watching the river banks, when suddenly from behind a little hill that formed the end of a hog back, which extended well out into the bottom, he saw a herd of seventy or eighty buffalo, come running as hard as they could across the bottom, and plunge into the river just above the boat. The great animals ran as if frightened, and seemed to regard nothing but the danger behind them. As the boat went along, and the buffalo swam to cross the stream, they came nearer and nearer together, and at last it was evident that the buffalo would pass very close to the boat. They swam rapidly, and with them were many little calves, swimming on the down stream side of their

mothers, and going swiftly and easily. Jack shouted to Hugh, who, with him, watched the buffalo, and in a very few minutes the boat was actually in the midst of the herd. The animals did not attempt to turn about, but swam steadily after their leaders, and some of them actually swam against the boat, and, only then seeming to understand their danger, turned about and, grunting, snorting, and bellowing, climbed up on each other in tremendous fright. As they came to the boat Jack at first had started to get his rifle, but Hugh called him back, and they both descended to the lower deck, where, with the other passengers, and the deck hands, they were actually within arms length of the buffalos. The mate, forming a noose with a rope, threw it over the head of a two-year-old, and half a dozen of the roustabouts, pulling on the rope, lifted the animal's head up on the deck, when the mate killed it, and it was presently hauled aboard and butchered. As they returned to the upper deck, having watched the buffalo, after the boat had passed, swim to the other bank and climb out of the water, and then stop and look at the boat, Jack said to Hugh, "Well, I saw a lot of buffalo last year, but it sort of excites one to see them again as close as those were."

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's so; but there was no use in your getting your gun, as you started to. I don't want you to act like all the rest of these pilgrims that come up the river, and to be shooting at everything you see that's alive. There'd have been no more fun in shooting one of those buffalo in the water there, than there'd be in shooting a cow on the

range. Of course, if a man's hungry, it's well enough for him to butcher; but if he just wants meat, and there's somebody else to do the butchering, he might just as well let him do it. I always used to like to hunt, and I do still, but it's no fun for me to kill a calf in a pen, or to chop off a chicken's head.

"That's so, Hugh," said Jack; "it would have been no more to shoot one of those buffalos in the water than it was for the mate to kill that two-year-old."

"That's so," said Hugh; "it would have been just the same thing, and you don't envy him the work he did, I expect."

"No indeed," said Jack, "not much."

"Now, if you want to fire a few shots," said Hugh, "if you want a little practice with your gun, get it out the next time we get close to the bank, and shoot at a knot in some cottonwood tree. I can watch with the glasses and see where you hit, and you can get some practice with your rifle, but won't show up a tenderfoot."

The sun was low that evening when they reached Wolf Point, the agency for the Assinaboine Indians, and it seemed as if all the Indians there must have clustered about the landing-place to welcome the boat; men, clad in fringed buckskin shirts and leggings, and with eagle feathers in their hair; bright-shawled women, carrying babies on their backs; small boys, naked, save for a pair of leggings and a breech-clout; and little girls, some wearing handsome buckskin dresses, trimmed with elk-teeth, and clinging to their mothers' skirts, made up the assemblage. Most interesting to Jack were the many travois, each one

drawn by a dog. Some of these were very wolf-like in appearance; others might have been big watch dogs taken from the front door yard of some eastern farm house. All seemed well-trained and patient; and when, a little latter, some of them started off for the agency buildings, dragging loads that had been piled on the travois, they bent sturdily to their work, and dug their feet into the ground.

"There's something, son," said Hugh, "that we are not going to see much longer. The dog travois has seen its best days, and before long dogs won't be used any more for that work. Why, I hear that even up in the North, dogs are not used in winter for hauling half as much as they used to be; and down here, the first thing you know, all these Indians will be having wagons, and driving them 'round over the prairie. Why, do you know, it ain't so very long ago since these Assinaboines had hardly any horses. They didn't want 'em; they said horses were only a nuisance and a bother to 'em, and their dogs were better. Horses had to be looked after; driven in and caught up whenever they were to be used, and then they had to be watched to keep people from stealing them; but dogs, instead of running away when you wanted to catch them, would come running toward you; they never ran off nor were stolen. Now-a-days, though, the Assinaboines have got quite a good many horses, and I expect to live long enough to see the time when dog travois will be a regular curiosity."

"Who are the Assinaboines, Hugh," said Jack. "What tribe are they related to?"

"They're Sioux," said Hugh, "and talk the Sioux language. Of course it's a little different from that talked by the Ogallalas and the down river Sioux; but still they can all understand each other, and they call themselves Lacotah, which of course you know is the name that all the Sioux have for themselves."

"And yet," he continued, "they have been at war with the Sioux and with the Sioux' friends for a good many years. I reckon there ain't any one that rightly knows when the Assinaboines split off from the main stock; it must have been a long time ago. But you talk with the Assinaboines, and they'll tell you — just as most of the other Sioux 'll tell you — about a time long ago, in the lives of their fore-fathers, when their people lived at the edge of the salt water. I expect maybe that means that they migrated a long way, either from the East or from the West, very far back."

"My!" said Jack, "if we could only know about all these things that happened, and what the history of each tribe was, wouldn't it be interesting?"

"It sure would," said Hugh.

"Well, Hugh," continued Jack, "what does Assinaboine mean? Has it any real meaning, like some of these other names of Indian tribes that you tell me about?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "it has a meaning, and I reckon it's a Cree word. *Assĭne* means stone in Cree, *poit* means cooked, or cooking, and the Assinaboines are called stone-cookers, or stone-roasters, I suppose because they used to do their cooking with hot stones. But of course that don't mean much, because pretty

nearly all the Indians that I know of used to boil their meat with hot rocks, except those that made pots and kettles for themselves out of clay. Nobody knows, I reckon, when the Pawnees and Mandans first learned how to make pots. I expect that was a long time ago, too. But most of these Indians used to boil meat in a kettle made of hide, or the paunch of a buffalo, filled with water. Then they'd heat stones in the fire, and put them in the water, taking them out as they got cool and putting in others, until the water boiled and the food was cooked."

"But," said Jack, "I should think when they cooked the hide or paunch it would break, and let the water spill out."

"No," said Hugh. "It would of course, if you kept cooking long enough; but one of these kettles would only last to cook a single meal; you couldn't use it a second time, but it was all right for one cooking. I have seen a hide kettle used, and eaten from it."

Jack sat thinking, for awhile, and then he turned to Hugh and said:

"I tell you, Hugh, if all you know about Indians, and about this Western country were put in a book, it would make an awful big one, would n't it?"

"Well, I don't know, son," said Hugh, "maybe it might; but a man has got to learn the life he's lived; if he does n't, he won't amount to nothing. I expect if all that you know about the East was put in a book it would make quite a sizable one."

"Oh," said Jack, "that's nothing. The things I know don't amount to anything, and everybody else knows them a good deal better than I do."

"Well, I tell you," said Hugh, "the things that are new and strange to you seem kind o' wonderful, but they don't seem wonderful to me; but I remember one time you were telling me something about catching fish down at the place called Great South Bay, and talking about seeing the vessels sailing on the ocean, and to me that seemed mighty wonderful."

By this time the boat had left the landing-place, and the light was growing dim. They turned and looked back, and there across the wide bottom was moving toward the Post, a long string of people, men and women and children and dog travois, so that it looked almost like a moving camp. Hugh and Jack sat for a while longer on the deck talking, and then, as the mosquitoes got bad, they turned in.

The next afternoon the boat reached Fort Peck, then one of the most important Indian agencies on the Missouri River. It stood on a narrow bench, a few log buildings surrounded by a stockade, and back of it the bluffs rose sharply, and were dotted with the scaffolds of the dead. It seemed to Jack that there must be hundreds and hundreds, if not thousands, of these graves in sight. From the poles of some of them long streamers were blown out in the wind, which Hugh told him were offerings tied to the poles of the scaffolds by mourning relatives. But few living Indians were seen here, and there were only three or four white men seen about the trading post. They did not leave the boat, which soon pushed on again.

"The Indians about here have been awful mean," said Hugh; "Lots of things were brought in here that the Sioux took from the Custer battlefield.

Somebody told me that Custer's gold watch was brought in here by an Indian, who wanted to know how much it was worth: but so many questions were asked him about it that he just put the watch in his sack and lit out, and has not been seen here since."

As the boat passed the mouth of the Musselshell early next morning Hugh pointed shoreward, and said:

"Do you see that place over there where that creek comes in, son?"

"Why, of course I see it, Hugh," said Jack, "and the timber that runs along it. What creek is it?"

"You ought to know," said Hugh, with a laugh; "you got scared in it a whole lot last summer."

"Why, Hugh, is that the Musselshell?" said Jack.

"That's what it is," said Hugh; "and seeing the mouth of the river, and them sticks there on the flat, reminds me of the big fight that took place there some years back. I wonder if you ever heard about it. I meant to tell you last summer, but somehow it slipped my mind. It was there that Liver-Eating Johnson got his name. They used to say that he cut out the liver of an Indian that got killed in that fight and ate it. Of course he never did, but they tell the story about him, and I rather think he was kind o' proud about it after a little while, and liked the name.

"I think it was in 1869 that the fight took place, along in the spring.

"You know the steamboats always have trouble in coming up to Benton in the low water; and along about 1866, after the mines got paying, and when the fur trade was good, some men at Helena formed a

company to make a road and start a freight line down to some point on the river that the boats could always get to. These men didn't know much about the river, and they chose the mouth of the Musselshell for the point where their road, which began at Helena, should end.

"Now, I suppose if they'd raked the whole river with a fine-tooth comb they couldn't have found a poorer place for a town, nor a poorer country to travel through, than this one they pitched on. The place chosen for the town was that little neck of land between the Musselshell and the Missouri. The soil is a bad-land clay, which in summer is an alkali desert, and in spring is a regular bog, in which a saddle-blanket would mire down. Then, all along the Musselshell was a favorite camping and hunting ground for the Indians, and in those days Indians were bad. Well, they made up their company, and started their town. There weren't many settlers, but a few people, mostly hunters and wood-choppers, stopped there; and of course, wherever there were a few people gathered together, there was sure to be a store and a few saloons.

"I think it was along in 1868 that a man came down there with a fine train of mules. Likely he expected to get some freighting to do when the boats came up the river. The stock was turned out, and some men were on guard, when a party of Sioux charged in among them, killed two of the men, and ran off every hoof of stock. The thing was done in a minute; and before the men could get out of their houses and tents the stock was gone, and the Indians

along with it: all except one young fellow, who, just to show what he could do, charged back and rode through the crowd, making fun of them as he went along. So far as anybody knew, not one Indian got hit.

"It was not very long after that that the Sioux came down and charged into the Crow camp, and ran off eight hundred head of horses. Of course that made a big excitement. The Crows jumped on their horses an pursued and they had quite a fight, and some of the Indians got killed.

"During the Spring of 1869, the Indians used to attack the town every few days; a Crow squaw that was living there got shot through the body, and a white woman was wounded, knocked down, and scalped, but I reckon she's living yet. Anybody that went out any distance from the town was sure to be shot at and chased. It was a time for a man to travel 'round with his gun loaded, and in his hand all the time. The Indians didn't do much of anything, but they kept the people scared up everlastingly. It got to be so, finally, that the Indians would charge down near the town, and then swing off and run away, and pretty much all the men would run out and run after them, shooting as long as the Indians were in sight.

"One morning there were a couple of Crow women out a little way from town, gathering sage brush for wood, and the Indians opened fire on them. The white men all rushed out and after the Indians, who numbered sixteen. They ran on foot over toward the Musselshell, and then up the bottom, not going very

fast, and the white men were gaining on them, and thinking that now they would force them to a regular fight; when suddenly, from a ravine on the Musselshell, a shot was fired, which killed a man named Leader.

"That stopped the whites right off, and they turned to run; and if the Indians had charged 'em then, I expect they'd have got every last one of 'em. But Henry McDonald saw what would happen if they ran, and, bringing down his rifle, swore he'd shoot the first man who went faster than a walk.

"They could see now that there was quite a body of Indians in the ravine on the bank of the Musselshell, but they could n't tell how many. There was some little shooting between the two parties. Most of the whites moved back to the settlement; but there were half a dozen men who did not retreat; but getting under cover, within thirty or forty yards of the Indians, held them there. They kept shooting, back and forth, and presently a man named Greenwood got shot through the lungs, and had to be carried back. The other men stood their ground, and the Indians, knowing that they had to do with good shots, did not dare to show their heads.

"After two or three hours of this sort of thing, it began to rain, a mighty lucky thing for the white men. They were all armed with Henry rifles, or needle-guns, while the Indians, for the most part, had bows and arrows, with some flintlock guns. They had stripped themselves for war, and had no clothing with which they could cover their gun-locks and bowstrings to keep them from getting wet. After a little

of this, the white men began to see that the Indians were practically disarmed, and began to think about charging them; but when they raised up to look, they saw that there was a big party of men there, and that the only way to get them, except in a hand to hand fight, was for some of the party to cross the Musselshell, and get to a point where they could shoot into the ravine, thus driving the Indians out and placing them between two fires. Three men started to do this.

"When the Indians saw what the white men were trying to do, they ran down to the mouth of the ravine and tried to shoot at them; but their strings were wet, and the arrows had no force and hardly reached the men, and very few of their guns would go off. The three men got across the river, and went down to a point opposite the ravine, and began to shoot at the Indians; but by this time all the men in the settlement had collected together, about eight hundred yards behind the Indians, and seeing these three men on the other side of the stream took them for Indians and began to shoot at them; so that the three white men who had crossed had to get away and re-cross the Musselshell. By this time half a dozen other men got around on the lower side of the Indians, and then again three men crossed the river and commenced to shoot up the ravine. This was too much for the Indians: they jumped out of their hole and started to get away, and everybody was shooting at them as hard as they could. The fire from the body of men near the town still continued, and obliged the men who were doing the real fighting to keep more or less under cover. The Indians broke

for the Musselshell, crossing it where they could, and most of them got away; but thirteen were killed, and it was said that a good many more died on the way to camp, and only one of the ninety and more who were in the fight escaped without a wound. The next day after that, the white men found the place where the Indians had stripped for the fight and left their things, and there over a hundred robes and two war bonnets and a whole lot of other stuff were found. Most of it was sold, and the money given to Greenwood, who was wounded. Jim Wells and Henry McDonald, I heard, each got a war bonnet.

"The freight road was given up, and pretty much everybody left the place,—except some traders who stopped there a little longer. Then Carroll was started, up near the Little Rockies, and in a very much better place, and that was the end of Musselshell City. It was at this same place that Johnson claimed to have made for himself a razor strap from a strip of skin that he cut from an Indian's back: but Johnson was always a good man to tell stories, and you never could be quite sure when he was telling the truth and when he was joking.

"A few years ago there used to be lots of talk about that fight, and the people called it one of the biggest lickings that the Indians ever got in this part of the country."

Pushing along up the river, the boat passed beyond the Musselshell, and then up by Carroll, and the Little Rocky Mountain, and the Bearspaw,—and at last one day, about noon, Fort Benton came in sight.

For the last two hundred miles they had seen

a good deal of game. Buffalo were almost always in sight on the bluffs, or in the bottom; elk, frightened by the approach of the steamer, tore through the willow points; deer, both black-tail and white-tail, were often seen, and on several occasions mountain sheep were viewed — once in the bottom and at other times on the high bad-land bluffs. One of the herds was a large one, which Hugh said must contain seventy-five or a hundred animals.

As Benton was approached, Jack began to feel more and more excited. Here he hoped to meet Joe, who had been warned some months before by Mr. Sturgis that Hugh and Jack would be at Benton early in July: and Joe would have with him the horses, a lodge, and all their camp equipage; so that, if nothing interfered to prevent, the next morning they could start out on their trip.

CHAPTER III

FOR THE BLACKFOOT CAMP

As the boat slowly drew near the wharf, Hugh and Jack, from the upper deck, recognized first the old adobe fort and then, one after another, the different buildings of the town. The arrival of the steamer was always a great event in Benton, and pretty much all the inhabitants of the town were seen making their way toward the water's edge. The throng was made up of whites and Indians, with an occasional Chinaman: for already Chinamen had begun to come into the country. At first the two watchers from the steamboat could recognize no faces, but, as the boat drew nearer and nearer, Hugh suddenly let his hand fall on Jack's shoulder and said, "There's Baptiste, and I believe that's Joe standing near him."

"Oh, where are they, Hugh? I can't see either of them:" and then a moment later, after Hugh had told him where the two stood, he saw them; and springing up on the rail, and holding to a stanchion, he waved his hat, and shouted out to Joe, who had already recognized him and made joyous gestures in response.

A little later, the four were cordially shaking hands on the shore: and presently, when the crowd of passengers had left the boat, the two old men and the

boys went on board again and, mounting to the upper deck, talked together. Jack's first question to Joe was as to the whereabouts of the camp.

"Down east of the Judith Mountains somewhere, I expect," said Joe in reply. "They went down there to kill buffalo; there's lots of buffalo over on the Judith, or between the Judith and the Musselshell. I guess they'll be there all summer, and before I left the camp I heard that they would make the medicine lodge somewhere out in that country."

"What about the hostiles, Joe?" said Jack. "Have they seen any Sioux lately?"

"No," said Joe, "but I've heard that there are a few passing back and forth, between the lower country and Sitting Bull's camp, over across the line."

"Like enough," said Hugh, "like enough. We've got to look out for those fellows; but they won't do nothing more than try to steal our horses."

Hugh had been talking quietly with Baptiste La Jeunesse, who told him what had been happening in Benton during the winter. This was not much: there was talk that a railroad was going to be built into the country, one that might even pass through Fort Benton itself, and this would make the town big and important, so people said — and Fort Benton would once more become what it had been in the early days of the fur trade, a populous and thriving place.

"And how have you been getting on yourself, Bat?" said Hugh.

"Oh, I've done well. I always have everything that I want, since you people came in here last summer and gave me the gold. Every month I go to the

bank, and they give me the pay for the money that you lent them for me, and so I live well. It doesn't make any difference to me whether I've work to do or not, yet always it is pleasant to be doing something, and so I keep on working. Also, there are some people in the town who are poor, just as I used to be; and now that I have money I can help them to live, just as your boy has helped me."

"Well, Bat, it makes me feel good that you are doing well, and I think that you will continue to do well from this on."

"And what are you going to do this season, Hugh?" said Baptiste. "Where are you going, and what are you going to do — hunting or trapping, or what?"

"Well, Bat," said Hugh, "I am traveling 'round again with this boy of mine. His uncle and his father and mother want him to spend the summers out here, and get strong and hearty, and they've told me to travel with him, and teach him about the way of living out here; the same lesson that you and I learned when we were young; only he will learn it in a better and easier way than we did. He's a good boy: I like him better all the time. I should feel bad if anything happened to him."

"Yes, Hugh, I think he's a good boy," said Baptiste. "Both of those boys are good. I like the Indian well. He came in here many days ago, and came to me; and since he got here, he and I have lived together. I like him."

Hugh now turned to the two boys, who were busily talking, and said; "Now, boys, if we're going to get

off to-night we've got to make a start right soon. I expect Joe has got all our stuff ready, except the grub, and if you and he will hurry up and get the horses together and get them saddled, I'll go and buy the grub, and put it in the wagon, and come down here and get our guns and beds, and we'll pack up and move out of town four or five miles and camp."

Both the boys jumped to their feet, and Jack said; "Hurray! that's what I want to do; I want to get out on the prairie once more, and I don't want to see a town again until I have to."

Jack and Joe started at once, and ran races with each other up the street, to see which should get first to the stable. Joe beat the white boy, who found that his winter's confinement, and his lack of exercise in the big city had made him short of wind; so that at last he got out of breath, and stopped running. When they reached the stable, Joe took his rope and went out into the corral, and caught a handsome little buckskin pony, and, saddling it, rode out to get the animals which were pasturing on the bluffs above the town. He was gone some little time, and then, Jack, who was watching for him, saw the familiar sight of loose horses running along the bluff, and then turning and rushing down its steep sides, followed by a cloud of dust; and then Joe, with whoops and yells, and quick turnings and twistings of his horse, drove them up to the bars, through which they crowded, and then stood quiet in the corral.

Jack thought that he would try his old scheme of calling Pawnee, and whistled sharply. The good horse threw up his head, and looked about, and then seem-

ing to recognize Jack, walked over to him, and arched his neck over his shoulder in the old-fashioned way. Jack was very much touched, and put his arms around the horse's head, and leaned his head against his neck, thrilled with affection for the animal that he had ridden so many miles. Presently they got out the ropes, and tied up the horses, and one by one they were saddled. They were all fat and in good condition, and some of them objected quite strongly to being saddled. The dun bucked when the flank cinch tightened on him, just as he had bucked the first time Jack ever saw him packed, and so did the star-faced bay. The others grunted and squealed and kicked a little, but on the whole took the saddling very well.

Not long after they had finished saddling up they heard a cheery call from the front of the stable, and, rushing out, Jack saw the wagon, piled up with food and beds, and Hugh and Baptiste, sitting in it. It took some little time to make up the packs, but by late afternoon this was done, the horses packed, and after shaking hands with Baptiste, the little train, with Hugh in the lead, Jack driving three pack horses, and Joe bringing up the rear, driving two more, filed out of the town and climbed the hills toward the upper prairie.

That afternoon they traveled until the sun went down, and then coming on a little coulee, through which water trickled, they camped. They were careful to picket all their horses; and after this was done, while Joe and Jack brought armfuls of willow brush from up and down the creek, Hugh cooked supper.

The next day they kept on. Now they were well away from the settlements, and game began to be seen. Only antelope, it is true, but of them there were plenty. Jack had a fair shot at a buck, at about a hundred and twenty-five yards, but failed to kill him — to his great mortification.

"Ha!" said Hugh, "you've got to learn how to shoot again; you shot too high, and missed him slick and clean. I remember the first shot you fired last year, when you first came out; you shot high then, just as you did now. When we get to camp to-night, you and Joe had better go out and shoot three or four times at a mark. You have got to learn your gun over again, and Joe of course has got to learn his for the first time." Jack had brought out from New York a gun for Joe, carefully selected from the stock of one of the largest rifle manufacturers in the world, and as yet Joe had not fired a shot out of it; but he seemed never to tire of looking at it, and putting it up to his shoulder, and sighting at various objects. That night they camped on a great swiftly rushing stream, near some high hills, or low mountains; and while he was cooking supper Hugh sent them off to try their guns. With the axe they shaved off the outer bark from a thick cotton-wood tree, and making a black mark on the brown surface, each fired five shots at it. Jack's first two shots were high, but the next three were clustered within the size of a silver dollar, all about the mark. Joe did not shoot quite so steadily, two of his shots being above, and two below, and one a little off to one side. When they returned to camp and Hugh asked them about their shooting, they told

him, and he advised them to fire a few more shots after supper, and, if necessary, a few in the morning.

"There's nothing, I hate worse than to hear a gun fired about camp," he said, "but guns are no use to people unless they understand them, and you boys must get used to your guns. It won't take you more than a very few shots to do this, and you certainly must do it."

The next morning they started on again. No signs had yet been seen of the Indians, but this day they saw a few buffalo, old bulls, mostly off to the north of them. In the afternoon they passed by the Moccasin Mountains, and camped on a little stream flowing into the Judith River. After they had unpacked their animals and made camp, Hugh said to Jack, "Son, have you ever been here before? Do you see anything that you recognize?"

"Why, no Hugh," said Jack, "I don't think I do;" and standing up he took a long look about him, up and down the valley, and at the hills on either side. Suddenly his face brightened, and he said, "Why yes I do, too. I know where we are. This is just where we came through last year, the second day after I got caught in the quicksands in the Musselshell."

"That's so," said Hugh, "this is just where we came. I wondered if you'd recognize it. You ought to do so, and I'm glad you do.

"Right over a few miles east of us is what we used to call old Camp Lewis. There used to be a trading store there, and a camp of soldiers, and a few men got killed there, mostly soldiers. I remember coming through here not many years ago, the afternoon after

some soldiers got killed on the bank of the creek, right close to the camp. There was a camp of Crows there then — about three hundred lodges. The Sioux came down, and ran off some government horses, and killed three recruits that were fishing here in the creek, and the Crows took after 'em, and had quite a fight, and Long Horse, the Crow chief got killed. They got seven of the Sioux, I think. They had quite a time here in the camp then. I remember Yellowstone Kelly was here, and three or four other men; I think the Sioux set them all afoot."

The next morning while Hugh was getting breakfast he said to Jack: "Son, why don't you kill some meat? You are going through a country where game is fairly plenty; anyway, antelope are, and there's a few buffalo; and besides that, here are some mountains right close to you, where there's surely lots of sheep. You boys had better make up your minds to do something to-day; if you don't I'll have to start out and hunt, to kill meat for the camp."

"Well, Hugh," said Jack, "I certainly would rather hunt than drive pack horses; and if you want me to I'll go off to-day and follow along a little closer to the hills, and see if I can't kill something."

"Do so," said Hugh, "and then if you kill anything you can easily overtake us. We will be traveling slow, and your horse is good and fat and can catch us wherever we are. All the same, keep your eye open for Indians, and don't let any strangers come up too close to you. I'd rather have you two boys go off together, but I've got to keep Joe with me, to drive these pack horses. You'd better throw the

saddle on your horse and start right off, and maybe you'll catch us before we've gone very far."

No sooner said than done. Jack saddled up, and having asked Hugh the direction in which the party would move, rode away to the left, toward the low foot-hills of the mountains. He had gone only a mile or two when, passing over the shoulder of the foot-hills, he found himself coming down into a narrow valley, in which pretty little meadows were interspersed with clumps of cottonwoods and willows. Three or four antelope were feeding in the valley not far off, but there was no cover under which they could be approached, so he rode straight along. As he drew near, the antelope ceased feeding and raised their heads, and then, before he was within easy rifle shot, trotted off to the other side of the valley, and stood on the hill-side watching him. After looking back for a few moments, they started, in single file, and slowly walked up the hill. They were by no means frightened, and it seemed likely that by taking a little time, after they had passed on out of sight, he might get a shot at them; but the brush above him on the stream seemed likely to hold a deer, and he turned his horse that way and rode quietly forward up the stream, among the groups of bushes. He had not gone very far when from a clump of willows at his right a big doe sprang into view, and moved slowly off by those high, long bounds which make the white-tail, in motion, one of the most graceful of animals. Jack's impulse was to jump off his horse and shoot at her, but he saw that, if he did this, he would be so low down that she could hardly be seen over the

tops of the willows. He checked Pawnee, cocked his gun, and rising a little in his stirrups, and gripping the horse with his thighs, aimed carefully at the back of the doe's head, just as she was rising in one of her leaps, and pulled the trigger.

Almost at the report, her long tail fell flat to her body, and she began to run much faster. He knew he had hit her, and before she had gone fifty yards, and while she was crossing an open bit of meadow, she fell. Jack rode up to her, and on turning her over found that he had made a good shot. A ball had entered her back, just to the right of the spine, and had pierced both lungs and heart.

Turning her over, to get her ready to put on the horse, he was glad to see that she was a barren doe, one that had not produced a fawn that spring, and so would be fat and good eating. She was pretty big, however, and Jack was a little uncertain just how he was going to get her on his horse. Of course by cutting her up it could easily have been done, for then the quarters would not be too heavy for him to handle. At first he thought that he would take in the whole animal, but considering the time that this might take, and the fact that he had to ride a long way before overtaking his companions, he determined to do things in the easier way. He skinned the deer, therefore, cut off the shoulders and hams, and tied them on his horse, and then taking out sirloins and tenderloins, and some of the fat, wrapped this up in the skin, and put that on behind the saddle. Now he had a fairly compact load, which could be easily carried, and would not be a great additional weight

for his horse; while on the ground were left all the bones of the deer, except those of the legs. This method of butchering he had learned from the Indians the summer before.

All this had taken some little time, and when Jack looked at the sun he saw that the morning was half gone. Hugh had told him that they would follow the trail around the point of the mountains, and would then strike the Carroll Road, and bend back toward the river again. This meant that if he could cross the point of the mountains he would save several miles travel, and this he determined to do.

Before starting, he tightened up his cinches carefully, for he knew that the pieces of meat tied on his saddle would give it more or less side motion, and he did not want it to chafe Pawnee's back. Then he climbed into the saddle and started. By this time the sun was pouring down hot upon him, and there was no breeze. From the high ridges that he crossed from time to time he had a wide view of the prairie, and of the distant mountains, the Little Belts and Snowies, which rose from the plain a long way to the south. Here and there on the prairie were black dots, which he knew were buffalo, and other white ones, much nearer, which were antelope. Occasionally, as he rode along, a great sage grouse would rise from the ground near his horse's feet, or a jack-rabbit would start up, and after running fifteen or twenty yards, would stop, sit up, raise its enormous ears, look at him for a moment, and then settle back on all fours, and flatten itself on the ground, so that if he took his eye off it for a moment he could not find it again.

It seemed to him then, as it had so often seemed before, a wonderful thing to see how absolutely this wild creature, like so many others, could disappear from sight even while one was looking at it.

As he rode over a high ridge, he saw on the hillside before him, two white-rumped animals, that for a moment he thought were antelope; but a second glance showed him that they were not, and, to his very great astonishment, he recognized them as mountain sheep — a ewe and her young one — which had been feeding on the prairie, just where he would have expected an antelope to be. He threw himself off his horse and, cocking his gun, jerked it to his shoulder and then paused, and lowering it again, stepped back and put his foot in the stirrup. As he mounted, the ewe, which had been looking at him, started to run, passing hardly more than fifty yards in front of him, closely followed by the lamb. A little further on, she stopped again and gazed, and Jack sat there and returned her look. The sight of the sheep had been almost too much for him, and he had come near shooting her,— but before he pressed the trigger he realized that if he shot her he should have to shoot the lamb, and he could not conveniently carry either, and the old ewe would be thin in flesh and hardly worth taking with him. The temptation had been strong, but as he sat there and looked at the graceful animal, which stood and stamped, while the lamb, close beside her, imitated her motions, he realized that it was a good thing to let them go.

It seemed to him a mysterious thing, though, that these sheep should be down here on the prairie, and a

long way from the rocky peaks, where he supposed they always lived. He made up his mind that he would ask Hugh about this when he got into camp and get him to explain it.

At last he had crossed the point of the mountains and began to descend. Stretching out toward the northeast he could see a dim thin line, which, although it was interrupted at times — and sometimes for long distances — he thought must be the Carroll Road. Then off a long way to the east was a line of dark — the timber along a stream's course — which he supposed was where they would camp to-night.

He had almost reached the level prairie, when suddenly he became aware of two horsemen galloping toward him from behind. He watched them as they drew nearer, and at last could make out that they were Indians; and by this is meant that he saw that they had no hats on. More than that, he could see, he thought, that one of them had red leggings.

CHAPTER IV

OLD FRIENDS AND NEW

Of course there were no known hostiles in the country, but at the same time he recalled Hugh's advice, not to let any Indians come too close to him. These men were galloping along and would soon overtake him; and if, by any chance they should happen to be Sioux, from Sitting Bull's camp, or worthless Indians of any tribe that he did not know, they might take his horse and gun, even if they did nothing worse. He decided then that he would find out who they were, and drawing up his horse on a little rise of ground, he dismounted and stood behind it, facing them with his rifle barrel resting in the saddle. The Indians were now only three or four hundred yards off, but when Jack did this they at once halted, and turning toward each other, seemed to consult. Then, one of them, raising his hands high in the air, held his gun above his head, and after handing it over to his companion, struck his horse with his quirt and galloped toward Jack, while the other man remained where he was.

The swift little pony was soon within easy rifle shot, and as its rider drew nearer and nearer, Jack seemed to recognize something familiar in the look of the man, yet he could hardly tell what it was; but when he was within speaking distance the man called out;

"Why, don't you know me, Master Jack? I'm Hezekiah;" and instantly Jack recognized his negro friend of the Blackfoot camp. He called back to him; "Hello, Hezekiah! come on; I didn't know who you were." And Hezekiah, turning about, waved to his companion, who started toward them.

Jack and Hezekiah shook hands, and Hezekiah said; "You done mighty well to stop us, Master Jack; you're making a good prairie man all right, and I'm glad to see it. Plenty Indians traveling through this country, back and forth, that would be willing to kill you for your horse and gun; and it ain't far off to the line, and they'd skip across and go to Sitting Bull's camp, and nobody'd ever know who done it. It's just like what all the Piegans said last year, after the Medicine Lodge, that you was sure goin' to make a good warrior."

"Well Hezekiah," said Jack, "I don't know as I'd have stopped you if Hugh hadn't spoken to me about that only this morning. He said that there were Sioux traveling back and forth, and that I had better not let any Indians come up close to me until I knew who they were. That's the reason I stopped you." At this moment the other Indian rode up, and handing his gun to Hezekiah, shook hands cordially with Jack. It was Bull Calf, one of his companions on the trip to the Grassy Lakes, where Jack had shot the Assinaboine who was trying to steal horses from the camp; a young man of good family whom he knew very well, and with whom he had been on several hunting excursions.

"Where's the camp Hezekiah?" asked Jack. "Hugh

and Joe have gone on ahead with the pack train, and I stopped behind to kill a deer. We're looking for your camp, and going to stay a little while with you, and then we're going off south into the mountians."

"The camp isn't far off Master Jack," said Hezekiah. "I expect it's right over there on Muddy Creek; somewhere in that timber. Some days ago they left Carroll, and are moving south now after buffalo; but Bull Calf, here, and me, we came 'round by the mountains here, to see if we couldn't kill some sheep. I want to get a couple of shirts made, and my woman says she'd rather make 'em of sheep than of antelope.

"I expect we'll strike the camp this afternoon somewhere and maybe we'd better be starting right along now." They mounted, and rode on over the prairie. Jack had many questions to ask about what had happened in the Piegan camp during the winter, for though Joe had told him much, there were still plenty of matters to be discussed. Hezekiah and Bull Calf wanted to ride fast, but Jack did not feel like doing so with his load, so he put the two shoulders of the deer on Bull Calf's horse, and tied down what he carried so that it would not shake, and they went on at a good pace. An hour or two of brisk riding brought them close to the stream; but before they reached it they saw the trail where the camp had passed. There were tracks of a great band of horses, and many scratches left by travois poles; and in the trail there were a number of fresher horse tracks, which showed where Hugh and Joe and the pack animals had passed along after the camp.

Jack had a feeling as if he were almost home. It seemed funny to him to think how eager he was to meet all the brown-skinned friends that he had left so many months before, and how much pleasure he felt in having come across these two on the prairie. Two hours before sun-down they began to see horses dotted over the hills ahead of them; and a little later they rode out into a broad open space in the river bottom, where stood a circle of white lodges, which they knew was the Piegan camp.

"Where do you suppose Hugh will camp, Hezekiah?" said Jack, as he ran his eye over the lodges, each one of which looked like every other lodge. It was evident that he could tell nothing by looking at the lodges, and he must look for the horses; and just as Hezekiah replied, he thought he saw old Baldy tied in front of a lodge on the opposite side of the circle.

"Why, I reckon he'll camp with Joe's people, Master Jack," said Hezekiah. "That's the Fat Roasters, you know, and they're over there across the circle. I reckon that's the old man now, drivin' pins for the lodge."

"Yes, that's it, Hezekiah," said Jack: "I see him now. I'll ride over there and get rid of my meat, and sometime to-night or to-morrow I hope to come to your lodge."

"Please do, Master Jack, and we'll be mighty glad to see you. I want to have you see the childern, too; they've grown a heap since you was here last."

As Jack stopped in front of the lodge, Hugh looked up from his task and said, "Well, you've got here all right, son. Killed somethin' too, I reckon."

"Yes," said Jack, "I killed a barren doe, and I reckon we've got meat enough to keep us going for a few days. I gave the shoulders to Bull Calf and Hezekiah, whom I met out here on the prairie, but I've got the hams here. Shall I turn Pawnee loose, or shall I tie him up here by old Baldy?"

"Better tie him up here," said Hugh. "I want to make arrangements with some young fellow to herd our horses; Joe's gone off now to try to do that. We've got the lodge up, and now pretty quick we'll have a fire and cook supper."

The news of the arrival of the strangers had already spread through the camp, and that night Hugh and Jack and Joe were invited to feasts at several lodges. They saw many of their friends: old John Monroe, Little Plume, Last Bull, and of course Fox Eye, and many others. Old Iron Shirt came around to their lodge, and shook hands cordially with Jack, from whom he accepted a plug of tobacco and a red silk handkerchief. It was late before the festivities were over, and when they turned into their blankets they were soon asleep.

While they were at breakfast next morning, Jack told Hugh about the sheep that he had seen on the prairie the day before, and how he had been about to kill the old ewe, and then had thought it better not to do so.

"You did just right, son," said Hugh; "I've said to you a good many times never to kill anything that you don't want, and can't use, and I believe that's the way to do. You were right not to kill the old ewe also because she wouldn't have been good for any-

thing; she'd have been poor from suckling her lamb, and you'd have just killed her without getting any good out of it. Besides that, the lamb would have starved to death if you hadn't killed it, and if you had killed it it would 'nt have been no good. No, you did right; you used good sense, and I like men, or boys either, to use sense."

"Well, Hugh, I'm glad I didn't shoot. Of course, maybe I would n't have killed the ewe anyhow, but I'd have tried. But what I wanted to ask you about was what those sheep were doing down there on the prairie. I supposed that sheep only lived on high mountains, or else in the very roughest kind of bad-lands. They 're called Rocky Mountain sheep; that ought to mean that they live in the Rocky Mountains."

"Well now, son, you're like a good many people that think that sheep ain't found anywhere except in the mountains, but that's a big mistake. In old times sheep were found on the prairie just about as much as they were found in the mountains. I expect they were always in the mountains, and in old times they were always on the prairie too. It has got so now that they're pretty scarce on the prairie, because so many people traveling around all the time shoot at them; but in old times it was no uncommon sight to see sheep feeding right in among the buffalo, and we often used to see them all mixed up with the antelope, on the flat prairie. Of course, sheep always like to be somewhere within reach of the buttes or mountains, or rough bad-lands, that they can run to if they get scared, but as for them not being on the prairie,

the way some people think, that's all a mistake. Up here in Montana, and in Dakota and Nebraska and Wyoming, I have seen them on the prairie, a long way from any hills. Why, I've even seen them out in the sand-hills, up not very far from the head of the Dismal River, and south of the Loup, but I suppose they came from up the Platte, where there are bad-lands and buttes, like Scott's Bluffs and Chimney Rock. But if ever people tell you that sheep are found only among the rocks, don't you believe them. I know you won't after to-day, because you saw them on the prairie yourself."

"Yes, Hugh, that's so; but just as you say, they started to run back to the rocks when they were scared."

"Why son, there's no better sheep country in America to-day, I believe, than within a day's ride of here. You take the Missouri River bad-lands, and the Little Rockies, the Judith Mountains, the Little Belts, the Moccasins, and the Bear's Paw; they're all good sheep countries, and always have been ever since I've been in the country; and I reckon if you ask any of the old Indians they 'll tell you just the same thing. Why, years and years ago, before the Indians got bad, there was no place where there were more mountain sheep than right along the Yellowstone, where the bluffs don't run more than a couple of hundred feet high, and there's a flat bottom below them, and just rolling prairie above."

"Well, I didn't know this at all, Hugh," said Jack, "and yesterday when I saw those animals on that little ridge, I could not believe that they were sheep.

I thought I must be mistaken, that they must be queer colored antelope, but then of course I saw the sheep horns and I knew that I wasn't mistaken."

"There's lots to learn about sheep yet, son; and you and I are not the only people that don't know much about them. The fact is, I don't believe anybody knows much about them.

"I expect there's more than one kind of sheep in the country, too. I have heard about a white sheep that they find away up north; and then a great many years ago, once when I went up north to Peace River, I killed a sheep that was pretty nearly black, and had black horns. I never saw but one little bunch of them, and killed one out of it, a yearling ewe; she was not like any other animal I ever saw before."

Not long after breakfast Hugh and Jack started out to make a round of the camp, and to call upon their friends. As they were passing a nice new lodge, a tall, slender, straight young man came out from it, and after hesitating a moment as he looked at them, walked up to Hugh, and extending his hand, said, "How d'ye do, Mr. Johnson. I guess you don't know me, but I've heard of you pretty near all my life. I'm Billy Jackson, a son of old Thomas Jackson, whom you may have known a long way back, and the nephew of John Monroe."

"Why yes, sure," said Hugh, "I've heard of you, and I used to know your mother right well. I'm glad to see you. Ain't you the young man that was with General Custer in the Black Hills, and afterwards scouted for Miles, down on the Yellowstone? or was it your brother? I think you're the man."

"Yes, I'm the man" said Jackson. "Bob scouted for Miles, too, and we both did a good deal of riding down there during the last of the wars, and now I've come up here to live in the Piegan camp."

"I'm glad to see you," said Hugh. "Let me make you acquainted with Jack Danvers; he and I've traveled together now for two or three years, and we spent last summer here in Piegan camp."

Jack and Billy Jackson shook hands together, and they parted; but Hugh asked Jackson to come round and eat with them that night, which the young man said he would do. He was a handsome fellow, lean and active; and after they had left him Hugh said to Jack, "Take notice of that young man, and if you've occasion to go on the prairie with him, do as he says. I've heard of him; he's a good man, brave, and knows the prairie well, and, at the same time, he has good sense, and isn't likely to get himself or his friends into any trouble."

At Little Plume's lodge they were made very welcome. His wife had apparently thought that they would come around that day, and as soon as they sat down in the lodge, food was set before them: boiled buffalo heart and back fat, and berry pemmican, with stewed service-berries, made a tempting feast, and Jack ate heartily of it.

Little Plume told them that the next day the camp would move south, and they hoped that before they got to the Musselshell, or if not, soon after crossing it, they would find buffalo. Hereabouts near the Missouri, there were but few, chiefly bulls. Further south, between the Musselshell and the Yellowstone,

scouts had reported great numbers of buffalo. That evening, Last Bull, Iron Shirt, and Fox Eye, Jackson and Little Plume, all came to the lodge, and they had a feast; and after all had eaten, there was much general conversation, but no formal speeches. Much of the conversation was in the Piegan tongue, which Jack as yet could hardly understand, but Jackson talked much to him in English, and told some entertaining stories. Among them was one of an adventure that he had had a year or two before, only a short distance from where they were now, and which had in it something of humor, and a little of danger. Jackson said:

"In the fall of 1879, Paul Sandusky, Jo Hamilton and I built our winter quarters on Flat Willow Creek, about twenty miles east of the Snowy Mountains. The country was then still infested with roving war parties from the different tribes, some coming from Sitting Bull's camp on the Big Bend of Milk River.

"As we intended to do some trading with the friendly tribes, especially the Crows and Blackfeet, we built commodious quarters, consisting of two buildings facing each other and about forty feet apart, and containing altogether five rooms. Joining on to the 'Fort'— as we called it — we constructed a high stockade corral for the horses.

"Game of all kinds was very plenty, and bands of elk and antelope could be seen almost daily within a mile or so of our place. Glad to have company, we gave free quarters to all hunters and trappers who cared to stop with us, and by March 1 we numbered eleven men, including our cook, 'Nigger Andy.'

"A few hundred yards below our fort a little creek,

which we named Beaver Castor, joined the Flat Willow. For some miles above its mouth it flowed through a deep cut in the prairie, bordered with sage brush and willows. At its junction with the Flat Willow, in the V formed by the two creeks, was quite a high butte. It sloped up very gently from the Flat Willow side, but was almost a cut bank on the Beaver Castor side.

"This butte was our watch tower. From its summit we could see miles and miles of the surrounding country.

"One morning in March most of the men went out antelope hunting, leaving four of us in camp — Jo Healy, laid up with rheumatism; Harry Morgan, the herder; the cook and myself. About ten o'clock this morning I concluded to take a hunt, and before catching up a horse I climbed the butte to see if I could spy a band of elk or antelope near by. As soon as I reached the summit I saw some moving forms on the prairie not far off, near Beaver Castor, and adjusting my glass, I found that they were a large war party of Indians afoot. They also saw me, for I saw several of them stop and level their telescope at me. I took pains to let them know I was not an Indian, for I strutted about with long strides and faced them with arms akimbo. Finally, as they came close, I backed down from the summit, very slowly, and placing a buffalo chip on top of a bush, so as to make them think I was still watching them, I dashed for the fort.

"I found that the horse-herder had caught up an animal and gone out hunting; so grabbing a lariat I

ran out to drive in the band, which was grazing nearly a mile from the house. I went down as fast as I could run, but found that I could n't get within roping distance of a single animal. They had been in the corral all night as usual, and in spite of my efforts they kept straggling and feeding along, and every minute I expected the war party to swoop down on me. However, I finally got them home and into the corral, and, my clothing wet with perspiration, I sat down to get my wind.

"In the meantime Andy had not been idle. He had placed all our spare arms and ammunition by the loopholes, had dragged Healy, bed and all, to a place of vantage, where he could shoot without hurting his rheumatic legs, and had then gone on preparing our dinner. So we waited and watched, expecting every minute to be attacked. But no Indians came. We had our dinner, and as the afternoon passed the boys kept straggling in by ones and twos, until by five all were home. None of them had seen any Indians.

"Finally I proposed that two or three of us get our horses and make a reconnoissance.

"'We don't want no horses,' said Sagebrush Charlie, 'just you and me go up on the butte and take a look from there.'

"I didn't like the proposition, for I surmised that the war party were concealed in the brush on Beaver Castor, probably near the butte. But on the other hand I didn't care to be bluffed, so I went with him.

"As we neared the top of the butte we proceeded very cautiously, moving only a step at a time. Only a few yards more and we would have reached the

summit, when we saw that an Indian on the opposite side of the butte was looking at us. We could see nothing of him but his head, and of course he could see only our heads. Thus we stood facing each other for what to me seemed a long time. 'Shall we shoot?' asked Sagebrush. 'No,' I replied. 'If we advance to shoot he will have the best of it, and if he advances we will have the edge on him.' So we continued to stare at him. After a while I saw that the Indian was beginning to back down out of sight, so I did the same. I made only a step and he had disappeared, but I kept backing away, watching the top of the butte, with rifle cocked ready to shoot in an instant. When half way down I turned to run and saw Sagebrush just disappearing around the corner of the fort. Until then I had supposed that he was at my side. So calling him some names I fairly flew down the hill, expecting every minute to have a shower of bullets about my ears. But I too reached the fort without any sign from the enemy.

"When I got inside I found the boys joking Sagebrush about leaving me, and seeing that he was ashamed of himself I said nothing to him, although I was quite angry.

"As soon as it was dark we put on a double guard, and kept ourselves in readiness for an attack. Late in the evening we concluded that the Indians would make a daylight raid on us, so we arranged about guard duty and slept by turns. However, we heard nothing of our dusky friends, and at six o'clock the cook called breakfast as usual. The horses had now been in the corral nearly twenty-four hours and were

very hungry, so four of us saddled up and went out to make a big circle and find out if our friends had left us. We went down Flat Willow a mile or more, then swung up onto the prairie, crossed Beaver Castor and headed home, but could see no Indian signs. Finally we went up on top of the butte, where Sage brush and I had seen the Indian the night before. There in the loose shale we found his tracks, and saw that after backing down a little ways he had, like us, turned and run by mighty leaps to the bottom. There we found a great number of tracks and a lot of moccasins, some meat, etc., and following the trail we found that the Indians had crossed Beaver Castor and gone up on the prairie, where in the thick dry grass we lost all traces of them, and concluding that they had left we went home and turned the horses out to feed, with a herder and one other man to herd them.

" After dinner, perhaps two or three o'clock, we saw a person on foot come down to the creek from the prairie, about half a mile below the house. I went down to see who it was, and found to my surprise that it was a lone Indian woman, and as soon as I came up to her she began to talk to me in a language which I at once knew to be Nez Percés, but which I could not understand. I replied to her in Sioux, and found that she understood and could speak a little of that tongue, and by piecing it out with signs we got along very well. I told her to go up to the fort with me and get something to eat, and afterward she could tell us her story. When we reached the place the boys all crowded around and stared at her, and asked all sorts

of questions, but I told them to wait, and we would hear what she had to say.

"The woman didn't seem to be at all embarrassed. She sat at the table and calmly and slowly ate the food the cook set before her, not heeding the ten or eleven pairs of eyes that were intently watching her. After she had finished eating I asked her to tell us where she had come from, where she was going and all about herself, and I interpreted her tale, sentence by sentence, to the boys. She said: 'I came from Sitting Bull's camp on Milk River, where some of my people, Nez Percés, are living with the Sioux. Two years ago, my son went with some Sioux and Nez Percés to war against the Crows. They had a big fight on the Yellowstone, and it was supposed that my son was killed. But not long ago I heard that the Crows had captured my boy, and that he is still living and in the Crow camp. Having no relatives and no husband, I made up my mind to go and live with my son, and started out; this is the twenty-third day since I left Milk River. I have been starved most of the time and am very tired.'

"'Hush!' said one of the boys, 'That's too durned thin. I move that we hang her right now.'

"At this, every one began to talk at once. Some said she was a spy, others that she was all right.

"Finally I said to her, 'The boys, some of them, think you are not telling the truth. Yesterday a big war party was here, and they think you belong to that outfit.'

"'How they lie,' she interposed. 'I have n't seen an Indian since I left Milk River.'

"'That may be,' I replied, 'you cannot blame the boys for being a little suspicious. However, they will not harm you. You are as safe here as you would be among your own people. Just as soon as this snow goes, one of our men will start for the Yellowstone with a four-horse team after some provisions, and you can go with him. From there it is only a short distance to the Crow camp. In the meantime you can stay with us here and rest up. Throw off your robe and make yourself at home.'

"'I like what you say,' she replied, 'but I am afraid of all these men. Let me stay close by you.'

"Wherever I went that afternoon she followed me, and when it came time to turn in I made her a bed of buffalo robes behind the counter. Some of the boys spread down in the room and others in the cook house.

"'I don't like this,' the woman said to me. 'I am afraid to sleep there; let me make my bed down beside yours.'

"'Don't fear,' I replied, 'no harm will come to you. No one in this place cares for you or wishes to harm you.'

"'Well, then,' she said, 'if that is so I will step out a minute and then go to bed.'

"Now the door to this room was fastened from the inside, when we wished it, by two wooden bars; outside we closed it merely by a rawhide thong and pin. Some of us were always at home, and when we all left this room we fastened the door with the thong to keep the dogs and the cold air out. As the woman started to go out I went up to the counter and took

my six-shooter, intending to follow her out, but quicker than a flash she darted through the door, and closed and fastened it with the thong and pin. Of course all the boys in the room made a rush, and two of us getting our fingers between the door and the jamb gave a strong jerk, snapped the fastening and we all ran out. The woman had disappeared in the darkness, but we could still hear her footsteps as she ran toward the brush. Suddenly she gave a peculiar kind of a whistle and from all around in the brush she was answered by the hooting of owls. We all rushed back into the fort, put out the lights and made ready for an attack.

"After an hour or so the boys began to talk. 'I knowed,' said one, 'that she was a spy.'

"'Didn't I say to hang her,' exclaimed another. 'You fellers that thought she was all right are sure soft.'

"We all sat up until long after daylight, and not until eight or nine o'clock did any one turn in. But we were not attacked, nor did we see the woman again.

"Several weeks afterward, when Hamilton went to the Yellowstone after supplies, he learned that this woman had stopped at the 'Circle N' ranch and that they had lost one hundred and forty horses."

CHAPTER V

BUFFALO HUNTING WITH THE BLACKFEET

EARLY next morning the camp was in motion, and they travelled south all day, making a long march. Hugh left the pack horses in charge of Fox Eye's people, who drove them along with their own, while he and Jack and Joe joined the flankers, who marched off to one side, and who killed a few antelope, a few bulls, and hunted out the stream bottoms that they passed. Each day these hunters killed just about fresh meat enough to support the camp, which as yet had plenty of dried meat, so that there was no suffering. That night Hugh told Jack that the next day they would strike the Musselshell, and very likely buffalo, but if not, they would cross the river and move on down toward the Yellowstone, where, on the Dry Fork, or Porcupine, they would be sure to get what they wanted.

"We can't stop very long with these people, son," he said; "not if we're going into the mountains, and going to work our way down through them back to the ranch. Of course we've got lots of time, but then we don't want to stay up here too long, and be rushed at the last, so that we'll have to hurry along and make our horses poor, and keep ourselves tired all the time. We can stop here for a while and kill buf-

falo, and then we 'll leave the people, and strike west into the mountains."

The next night they camped on the Musselshell, and word was brought that about twenty or twenty-five miles to the south buffalo were plenty. Orders were given that from now on no one should kill buffalo, and camp was moved a day's march still further south, to the neighborhood of the herd. The next day a bunch of buffalo was located in a place suitable for a surround. That night the old crier, as usual, rode around through the camp, telling all the people to get in their horses, to tie up their running horses close, ordering the women to sharpen their knives, and the men to whet their arrow-points, because the next day they were going to chase buffalo. The following morning, very early, Jack heard him shouting through the camp, calling to the people to "Get up ! get up !" It was still black night; the stars shone brilliantly in the sky, the light of the fire showed through the lodge-skins, and sparks were rising with the smoke, when Jack went out to saddle up Pawnee. Hugh had had offers of buffalo runners from several of his friends. Last Bull had asked him to ride the spotted horse that he had several times used the year before, while Jackson had pressed upon him a beautiful buck-skin that he declared was the best buffalo horse in the camp. The excitement which always precedes a buffalo chase pervaded the camp, and every one seemed to be hurrying in the performance of whatever task was at hand. It was still long before daylight when Jack and Hugh, following the men who were starting out, found at a little distance from the

camp the group of hunters who were being held there by the soldiers.

The sky was just becoming gray in the east when the soldiers started off, and the hunters followed; and just after the sun had risen, the halt was made behind a hill which hid the herd from them. After a little pause, and a few low-voiced directions, horses were changed, the line spread out, and at first going slowly, rode up to the crest of the hill, pushed over it, and hurried down toward the unfrightened buffalo. These were slow to see their enemies, and the horsemen were close to them before the herd got started. Jack held back Pawnee until the word came for the charge, and even after that he still restrained him, not wishing him to run too hard at first, for the horse was fat, and might lose his wind if pushed at the start.

He gave no thought to the whereabouts of his friends; Joe and Hugh would no doubt take care of themselves. Just before he overtook the last of the bulls, however, he was aware of a man riding close to him, and turning saw Billy Jackson, riding the little buckskin, without a saddle, and carrying in his hands a bow and some arrows, while he had a quiver on his back.

Jack laughed at him. and signed to him that he was armed with good weapons, and Jackson nodded. A moment later they were mixed up with the dust of the flying herd, and surrounded by buffalo, and Jack bent his energies to killing a couple of cows. The bulls were soon passed, and Pawnee, running free and easily, forged up to the cows. Two fat ones were running just ahead of him, lumbering heavily, and

with their tongues out, yet getting over the ground with surprising speed. He drew up alongside of one, and shot it, and it turned a somersault; then touching Pawnee with his heel, he was soon riding close to another, which also he killed by a single shot. Then turning, he rode back to the last cow, and looked at her. She was quite dead.

The task of butchering seemed rather a heavy one, but he went to the cow first shot, and, with some trouble split her down the belly, and then re-mounting, went back to the other cow, which he treated in the same way. Then he sat down on the ground in the shade of his horse, and waited.

An hour later the women and girls and children were seen coming over the hills with their travois, and scattering out to look at the dead buffalo, over many of which men who had returned were now working. When Fox Eye's family came along, Jack spoke to the wife, and made her understand that these two were his buffalo, and with two of the other women she set about skinning and cutting them up.

That night in the lodge, as they were getting ready for bed, Hugh said to Jack, "Son, have you ever been through this country before? Do you see anything that you recognize?"

"Why yes, Hugh, of course, we came through it last year when we were coming north, but I haven't seen anything to-day that I knew."

"Well," said Hugh, "I'm not very much surprised at that, but right along here somewhere is where we passed last year, the second or third day after we crossed the Yellowstone River, coming north. Now,

I ain't never forgot that sheep's head that we left up in the tree down there. As I told you then, it's a better head than most, and likely a better one than you'll ever kill again, and I was thinking that it would n't be a bad idea for you and me to ride down there and get it. We can go in a day, and come back in another, and we can easily enough carry the head with us, and take it back to the ranch. What do you say?"

"Why, sure Hugh;" said Jack, "I'd like to do that mighty well. I've always felt sorry that we lost that sheep head, and felt that I wanted it to take back east. I never thought of our getting it this year; in fact I never expected to see it again. I'd like very much to get it, if you feel like it."

"Well, say we do it. We can start to-morrow or next day; the Indians 'll be here now two or three days at least, killing and drying meat, and we can easily enough go there, and come back and catch them before they leave these parts. You and I can go alone, or we can take Joe; or if you like, we can ask anybody else that we want to go down there with us. It 'll be a nice little trip."

So it was arranged that within a day or two they should start for the Yellowstone River, to get the sheep's head.

It was the second day after that they finally got away. Joe wanted to go with them, and when they told Jackson what they intended doing, he said that he too would like to go. This made a party of four capable men, to whom no danger could come. They took a couple of pack horses, to carry their bedding

and provisions, but no shelter, for the weather was bright and dry, and there seemed no prospect of rain. On their way to the Yellowstone they rode constantly through buffalo and antelope, tame and unsuspicious, and just moving aside from the track of the travellers as they passed along. That night they camped on the little stream just where Jack had killed the sheep, and reaching camp before sundown, Hugh and Jack rode up the stream to the tree where the sheep's head had been placed, took it down and brought it to camp. The ashes of the fire of the year before, and the bones of the sheep from which they had cut the meat called up old memories. Even the places where the lines had been tied for drying the meat were remembered.

Jack was glad enough to get this head again. As Hugh had said, it was a very fine one. The great horns swung around in more than a complete curve, and although near the base they were more or less bruised and battered by the battles the old ram had fought, the tips of the horns were very nearly perfect. The skin of the head and neck had been picked by the birds and bleached by the weather, and Hugh said; "I'm not sure that it will do to use in covering the skull, son; but even if it is too hard and sunburned to make anything out of, I'd take it along. If we get another good ram on the trip you can take his scalp; but if we don't, maybe the man that puts up your head can make something out of this."

The next morning before starting back, they rode down to the Yellowstone River, and looked up and down the valley. There were some buffalo here too,

and a few elk; but there was nothing to keep them, and they turned about and returned to the Piegan camp, which they reached that night.

For some days longer the camp remained here, killing buffalo and drying the meat. Then they moved east, one day's journey, to another little stream, and again hunted from here. By this time many buffalo had been killed, and many robes made. The parfleches were full of dried meat and back fat; and now presently the chiefs began to consult as to whether they should not go north again to the neighborhood of the mountains, for the women wished to gather roots and berries for the winter.

One evening when Jack came in from the hunt he saw a great crowd of people, men, women and children, gathered just outside of the circle. They seemed to be having a good time, for shouts of laughter and shrill screams from the women told that something was happening which amused them all.

Riding up to the edge of the crowd, Jack saw in the midst of it a little buffalo calf, standing there with its head down and tail in the air, facing with very determined attitude two or three small boys who were trying to approach and get hold of it. Every now and then one of the little fellows would get up his courage and venture close to the calf's head, when the calf would charge him and the boy would jump out of the way; but just as Jack came to a place where he could see, one of the boys went slowly forward toward the calf, and just as the calf began to charge, one of the boy's companions gave him a push forward, so that instead of dodging the calf he met its charge, and

was knocked sprawling on the ground. Then everybody screamed with laughter, and the boy scrambled out of the way as fast as he could.

At one side of the ring of people, Jackson was standing, evidently much amused at what was going on. Jack called out to him, "What are they doing, Billy?"

"Why, I roped this calf to-day and brought him in to try to take him back to the river, where there are some cows, and raise him, but some of these small boys got bothering and teasing him, and I told them if they didn't let him alone I'd turn him loose, and let him take care of himself, and now it seems to me he's doing it pretty well; he's knocked a half dozen of 'em out of time already, and once in a while, if he gets real mad, he charges into the crowd, and I tell you they scatter."

The fun went on for a little while longer, and then Jackson, after speaking to the people, put a rope about the calf's neck, and with the assistance of two young men, dragged it away to his lodge, where it was picketed to a stake firmly driven into the ground.

That night, Joe said to Jack, "Say, Jack, do you want to see some fun to-morrow?"

"Of course I do," said Jack. "I always want to be around when there's any fun going on."

"Well," said Joe, "there's going to be some fun to-morrow; at least I think there is. Some of the young men have been making fun of Eagle Ribs; they say that there's something he dare not do; to jump from his horse to the back of a bull, and ride it. When they said that, Eagle Ribs said, 'Why do you

talk about doing that? You should talk about something that is really dangerous. I should not be afraid to jump on a bull's back and ride him; but it's too easy; I do not care to do little things like that. It would be a trouble to me, and could not do any one any good.' The others kept teasing him, and making fun of him, and at last, after they had bothered him a good deal, Eagle Ribs said, 'It will be a little trouble to do this, but if you want to see me I will do it. I will ride a bull; the fastest and strongest that I can choose. Watch me to-morrow, and see whether I do it or not.' So to-morrow we're all going together, to see whether Eagle Ribs will ride the bull."

"But isn't there danger that the bull will throw him off, and catch him and kill him?"

"No," said Joe, "I guess he can stick to it; or, if he can't do that, why he'll have to be quick on his feet if the bull does throw him; they can't turn very quickly, you know, and Eagle Ribs, if he's smart, can get around and keep out of the way of his horns. Besides that, there'll be a lot of us there, and we can tease the bull, and get him to chase us, if Eagle Ribs should be in any danger."

"Well," said Jack, "it's going to be a regular circus, I guess, and I'll have to be there."

"Yes," said Joe, "you want to be there if you can; and a lot of us young fellows are going to keep pretty close together, and I think we'll have a real good time, even if we don't kill any buffalo. The camp has got about all the meat now it wants, anyhow."

The next morning before the chase began, Jack and Joe found themselves among a lot of boys about

their own age, many of whom were making fun of and teasing Eagle Ribs. When the chase started the boys did not ride as usual to try to catch cows, but instead of that singled out some old bulls that made up the rear of the herd, and turned them off on to the prairie.

Then they all began to whoop and yell, and call out Eagle Ribs' name, and say to him, "Now is the time to show us what you can do. Here is your horse; now ride him." Eagle Ribs was riding a good horse, and at once accepted the challenge. He pressed the animal close up to a bull, and when he was so near that his horse's side almost touched the buffalo's side, he reached far forward, grasped the long hair on the buffalo's hump, and threw himself from his horse onto the bull's back. The bull was frightened, and for a few minutes it ran faster than all the horses; and then forgetting that it was being chased, and only anxious to get rid of the terrible burden that it was carrying, it stopped, and began to plunge and buck, and skip around, and acted as if it were a calf instead of a huge old bull. Eagle Ribs clung to it with both hands, and with his legs, but the bull jumped so high, and came down so hard, that two or three times he was shaken from his seat. The boys all about him were shouting with laughter, some of them calling out encouraging words to the bull, and some to the rider.

The bull seemed very strong, and for a long time did not get tired, and two or three times Jack feared that the boy would be thrown from his back. Presently, however, the bull stopped, and stood with his

"HE REACHED FAR FORWARD, AND GRASPED THE LONG HAIR ON THE BUFFALO'S HUMP."—*Page 82.*

head down, glaring at the horsemen about him, as if he wanted to fight. Now the boys began to ask Eagle Ribs why he had stopped; why he did not ride further; and one of them threw his quirt to him, telling him that he should use this to make his horse go better. Others ran their horses close by, in front of the bull, trying to make him charge. Toward one of these horses he rushed furiously, and as he did so, Eagle Ribs slipped from his back and ran away in the opposite direction, and got behind a horse ridden by one of the boys. Jack rode up to him, and signed to him to get on behind him, and then they went back to where Eagle Ribs' horse was feeding, and he mounted him. Meantime, the bull had run on, and some of the boys had killed him.

The next evening the old crier rode about the camp, shouting out the orders of the chiefs; telling the people that the next day, early, the camp would move back to the great river.

On the evening of that day Jack was awakened by a shot in the camp, and then another, and then a rush of people, followed by a swift pounding of horses' hoofs on the prairie. He scrambled from his bed, put on his moccasins, and seizing his gun and cartridge belt, rushed out-of-doors. Joe was standing in front of the lodge, having just come out, and Jack asked him what was the matter. "I don't know sure," said Joe, "only horses have been stolen."

"Well," said Jack, "why don't they go after the thieves?"

"Oh," said Joe, "that would not do; that is too dangerous. Suppose we were to run out onto the

prairie, chasing the thieves, they could stop behind any sage brush, or the edge of any hill, and shoot us as we came up to them, before we could see them. We'll have to wait until to-morrow, until it gets light, and then take good horses and try to catch them."

The whole camp was now thoroughly awake, and the fires were made up in every lodge, while people went about visiting each other, and trying to find out what the extent of the loss had been. It appeared that only three good horses had been taken; but more would have been stolen if it had not happened that a man coming back late from a gambling game, and seeing somebody cutting the rope of a horse in front of his lodge, had shot at him with a pistol that he carried. The enemy threw himself on the horse and rode swiftly away, and at the sound of the shot a half dozen men rushed from their lodges and fired at the retreating sound.

It was several hours before the camp quieted down again, and before daylight next morning forty or fifty men on good horses were prepared to follow the trail, and try to overtake the thieves. Both Jack and Joe wished to accompany the pursuing party, but Hugh advised them not to. He said, "If we had come up here to spend the summer with these people, maybe there'd be no harm in your going off, but now in the course of a few days we're going to leave them and go into the mountains, and if you run your horses down, or if either of you should get hurt, why it might spoil our whole trip back to the ranch. These Indians ain't likely to overtake those fellows, and 'twill just be a long hard ride for nothing. We'd

better stop at the camp for two or three days more, and then strike out for the mountains, just as we intended to, and go on down there and see that place they used to call Colter's Hell, and then go on down through it, and back to the ranch." The boys, rather unwillingly, agreed to do this.

Three days later the Piegan village was once more camped not far from the Judith Mountains, and all the pursuing warriors had returned, not having overtaken their enemies. Dire were the threats that they made against the Crows who had stolen the horses, and a number of war parties were made up to go south and make reprisals on that tribe.

CHAPTER VI

AMID WONDERS OF THE YELLOWSTONE PARK

It was toward the middle of August that Hugh and Jack and Joe, with their little pack train, started southwest, to strike the Carroll Road, to go to the place once known as Colter's Hell, and now as the Yellowstone Park. Their animals carried only their provisions, messkit and bedding, and a skin lodge which Hugh had purchased from Fox Eye's wife. Their way led them through the beautiful Gallatin Valley, crossing the surveyed line of the Northern Pacific railroad, then being built westward, and then over the mountains to the valley of the Yellowstone, which they followed up to the cañon. Before they reached the Gallatin Valley they had seen plenty of buffalo, and had killed one for fresh meat, while in the Valley there were many antelope. In the Bridger Mountains, by which they passed, elk and deer were abundant; and one morning in the trail which they followed were seen the tracks of an enormous bear and two small cubs.

In the mountain streams which they crossed, trout were abundant, and they greatly enjoyed the delicious fish which were so easily caught.

A wagon road had been built through the cañon into the Yellowstone Park, and here a number of white people were travelling back and forth, and

wagons were hauling material for hotels and other buildings that were to be put up near the Mammoth Hot Springs. They reached these one night, and spent the next day wandering about them, marveling at the floods of hot water which poured over the many tiny falls, and deposited the lime which had built up the terraces of what the people there called "the formations." From an old German, Jack purchased three or four articles: a horse shoe, a nail, and the twig of a tree which had been suspended in the water until coated with a beautiful white covering of lime.

The next day they climbed the hill to the right and came into a level park-like country, which they followed south. It was a picturesque region, with grand mountains showing on every hand, yet nearby, a green level meadow, spangled with wild flowers, and a little further back dotted with clumps of pines and spruces, which were very beautiful.

At every step there was something new to be seen: new birds, new animals, and new scenery. The trail led up a fork of the Gardiner River, and then, crossing over, struck one of the heads of the Gibbon River, down which they passed, and then suddenly found themselves in a country of hot springs, which steamed, and sometimes threw up boiling water to a considerable height. This was the recently discovered Norris Geyser Basin, and here they camped, and spent the day walking about among the hot springs, which at first were very awe-inspiring. In many of them there were old tree trunks and branches of trees, which, when taken out and examined, seemed to be partly

turned to stone. Fine particles of a flinty material seemed to have penetrated all the pores of the wood, and while the branches were not hard, the woody matter in them seemed gradually to be changing to stone. As they sat eating their supper that night, Hugh said to Jack, "Well, son, I don't wonder that the mountain men in old times used to call this Colter's Hell. It is surely a place where the flames down below seem to be mighty close to the surface of the earth."

"It makes me afraid," said Joe.

"Well," said Jack, "it does me too a little. This morning I was afraid pretty nearly every minute that I'd fall through the ground and get into hot water below."

The next morning they moved camp, and rode over toward the river intending to look at the Grand cañon, and the wonderful falls of which they had heard.

Although the Yellowstone Park had been known for more than ten years, few people had as yet visited it. Nevertheless, they saw a number of visitors, some travelling with teams, and some with pack trains, and altogether the Park seemed quite a bustling place. That night they camped on the head of Alum Creek, and the next day, leaving their pack horses picketed and hobbled at the camp, rode over to see the falls. They rode first down toward the river, passing the Sulphur Mountain, a great barren hill, full of hot springs and sulphur vents, about which much sulphur had been deposited. Many fragments of the bright yellow mineral were strewn on the

ground, and at one place Hugh noticed where two or three grass blades had fallen across one of the vents' and calling the boys' attention to this, they all dismounted to look at it. About these blades of grass, and on their slender heads, most delicate and beautiful crystals of sulphur had collected. These were so fragile that a little motion made them loose their hold, and drop from the grass, or else break, so that it was impossible to carry them away. Near here, at the foot of the hill, was a large spring, six or eight feet in diameter, and boiling violently. The water was sometimes thrown up eight or ten feet high, not in jets, but seemingly by impulses from the center of the pool, so that the spray was sent outward in all directions.

They then followed down the river for two or three miles. It was a broad stream, swiftly-rushing yet smooth, and nowhere interrupted by rocks or rapids until the upper falls were almost reached. Here were short rough rapids and then the tremendous falls. The great mass of dark water glided rather than plunged into the depths below, and just below the crest of the cataract was broken into white foam, which, further down changed to spray. The falls are 162 feet high, and clouds of white vapor constantly rose from the water below, and hid the view. Looking down the stream, they had a glimpse of the wonderful cañon below.

The roar of the falls was so tremendous that conversation was impossible, and nothing was said; but presently they left the upper falls and rode on north to the lower one. Here was repeated the marvelous

impression which they got from this tremendous body of water falling 150 feet sheer to the great basin below, and from under the mist cloud that hid the foot of the fall came out the narrow green ribbon of the river, winding and twisting, hardly to be recognized as a river, dwarfed by distance, and creeping with a slow oily current. On either side the stream rose the walls of the cañon, five or six hundred feet to the pine-fringed margin above.

Looking down the stream, Jack saw a cañon a thousand feet deep, and perhaps twice as wide, extending for miles to the northward. Its sides were curiously sculptured and carved into fantastic forms. In one place a vertical cliff supported lofty cones of rock, ranged side by side upon the same horizontal ledge along its face. Again, a narrow buttress arose from the river's level in a series of pinnacles and turrets overtopping one another, until the summit of the cañon wall was reached. At one place that wall was so nearly perpendicular that it seemed as though a stone dropped from the edge of the cliff would fall at once into the water of the river. In another, the decomposing rock had been eaten away above until a talus of fallen rock and earth arose in a steep slope half way to the top. But to Jack's mind the glory of the cañon was in its color. The walls glowed with a vivid intense radiance which is not less wonderful than beautiful. Browns and reds and pinks and yellows, and delicate grays and pure whites had painted these hard rocks with a wealth of coloring hardly to be described in words. In the sun the cañon walls shone with brilliancy. When the clouds passed

over the sky they grew duller and softer, but were hardly less beautiful. Down close to the river were the most vivid greens, and in the mist which rose from the foot of the fall were seen, when the sun was shining, all the hues of the rainbow.

The travellers sat long watching this wonderful sight, and then pushing along the margin of the cañon, below the falls, walked out on a projecting point of rock, and looked up and down the river. The more they gazed, the more wonderful it seemed, the harder to take it all in, and the harder to put into words.

On a pinnacle of rock, rising from the end of the point on which they had walked, was a great nest, in which the boys noticed two large and downy young birds. Flying up and down over the river, sometimes low over the water, again far above the heads of those who stood on the edge of the cañon, were great hawks — eagles, Hugh afterward said they were, but Jack recognized them as fish-hawks — and while they were standing there, one of these great birds brought a fish to the nest, and tearing it to pieces with its beak, gave the fragments to its greedy young. Jack noticed, also, little sparrow-hawks flying about the edge of the cañon, and, far below at the edge of the river, saw little birds flying from point to point, which he thought must be dippers.

The whole day was spent here, for no one seemed to wish to return to the camp; but at last, as the sun swung low, and the pangs of hunger began to be felt, they returned to their horses, and mounting them, were soon at camp once more.

The next morning they set out up the river to go to the lake. On the way they passed two well known places. The Mud Volcano, a huge hot spring of gray clay, which steamed, and bubbled, and thumped, and sometimes spouted, throwing up its mud to a great height. Jack in his mind compared the boiling mud to mush boiling in a kettle, but as this pool of mud was fifty feet in diameter, the comparison was not a good one. All about, the trees were splashed with mud, which had dried on them, showing that at some time, not long before, there had been an eruption. Nearby, on the hillside, was a steam spring in a little cavern, which they had heard of as the Devil's Workshop. From this cavern came constantly great volumes of steam, while within it were heard hollow bubbling noises, which sounded like the clang and clash of great pieces of machinery turning. It was a mysterious place, and neither one of the three cared to go very close to it. There were boiling springs and sulphur vents hereabout in great plenty, and the place seemed an uncanny one.

The way to the lake was attractive: it led through forests, sometimes of living green, and at others killed by fire. Occasionally they passed through pretty grassy meadows, and from them had charming views of the river, which grew wider as they approached the lake, and seemed to spread out over wide flats. To the right the mountains rose sharply, forming the "Elephant's Back," a thousand feet in height.

Presently they came to a broad opening, and saw before them the lake. At the outlet the grass grew thick and rank, and in the marshes, pond-holes and

sloughs here, they saw many flocks of wild ducks and geese ; and sand-pipers and beach birds fed along the shore. Some swans were seen, and a few great white pelicans.

Their fresh meat was now exhausted, and for a day or two they had been living on trout, of which great numbers were caught in the streams that they had crossed, for fish are abundant everywhere in the mountains. When they made camp that night, Jack got out his line, and cutting a pole, went down to the shore to catch some fish, while Hugh and Joe made the fire.

Jack had hardly thrown his hook in the water when it was seized, and he dragged a large fish to shore. As he was taking it off the hook however, he noticed a bunch on its side, and after examining it for a moment, cut into this bunch with his knife, and drew from it a long white worm. He got a dozen trout, but all of them seemed to be afflicted with this parasite, and finally putting up his line he carried them to the fire, and showed them to Hugh. Both Hugh and Jack agreed that these fish were not fit to eat, and that night they supped on dried meat and back-fat.

As they had made camp that night they had noticed, just beyond them, two white tents, and had seen some horses feeding near the lake shore. Shortly after their supper, a man walked into the camp, and after saluting them, sat down by the fire. A little talk showed that he was a member of the geological survey that worked in the Park, and he had been attracted to their camp by the fact that they had an

Indian lodge. He was a pleasant man, and seemed quite willing to talk, and to answer all their questions, and very much interested in his work. After he and Hugh had talked together for a while, Jack ventured to ask some questions about the Park, and especially about the place where they now were. "Won't you tell me, sir," he said, "what you can about this big lake that we are on. It looks to me awful big to be up here high in the mountains. Of course I know it isn't anything like the Great Lakes; still it's the largest lake I ever saw."

"It is a large lake," said their visitor, "for it contains about 150 square miles of water, and there is probably no lake in North America of equal size at so great an elevation. You see, we are about 7700 feet above the level of the sea. Roughly speaking, the shape of the lake is like that of an open hand which lacks the first and middle finger; the wrist is the northern end of the lake, the west arm answers to the outstretched thumb, and the south and southeast arms to the ring and little finger. If you are going to travel around it, you will feel that it is a lovely sheet of water. It is very picturesque, and in fair weather it lies here like a great sapphire beneath the unclouded sky. But when the storms come up, and the wind rolls down along the mountain sides, the lake can get up a great sea, and one would not care to be out on it But in fair weather it is very beautiful—to me the loveliest spot in all the park. And what is more, I never get tired of it; the more I see it, and the more familiar I become with its scenery, the lovelier it is. From every promontory and every bay, and from

every hillside above it, one has always a different view, and each view has a charm that is all its own."

The geologist sat there long with them that night, talking to them in a most interesting way about the Park and the geysers and the cañons. He told them that all this country was volcanic in origin, and that for some reason or other, which he did not know, the heat still remained close to the surface of the earth; and that this was the reason that there were so many hot springs and geysers here.

"It's one of the most interesting regions in the world," he said, "and one of the most beautiful. As yet, people do not appreciate it. Many people do not even know that it exists; but the time will come when thousands will gather here each summer, from all quarters of the world, to see its beauties. Geologically, it is most interesting, and already geologists from all over the world are coming to see it, or are making plans to come. I predict that the time is coming when the Yellowstone Park will be acknowledged to be the most wonderful place in the world."

As the visitor rose to go, he looked about the lodge and said, "So this is an Indian lodge, is it? I've often read about them, but this is the first one I've ever seen. They seem warm and comfortable, but are they not rather smoky?"

"No," said Hugh, "they're not smoky; but you must remember they're not made to stand up in; people in the lodge are expected to sit down, or to lie down. If there's a fire burning, and no wind blowing, or if the air is damp and heavy, smoke often gathers in the top of the lodge, and a man standing in it finds

about his head more than he likes. Stoop down a little bit and you will see that the smoke no longer troubles you." The geologist did as Hugh advised, and seemed to be greatly interested by the discovery that it was as he had said; and then bidding them good night, he left the lodge.

CHAPTER VII

GEYSERS AND HOT SPRINGS

THEY were afoot before the sun had arisen next morning, and the outlook over the lake was beautiful. Away to the east and south were many mountain peaks, the names of which they did not know; but all grand and majestic, and far away to the south was one larger than any of the others, and covered with snow. As Jack looked at them, he saw these snowy crowns take on a glow of pink, and then grow brighter and brighter, and then could see the sunlight creep down the sides of the mountains, and finally it was broad day. The islands in the lake interested him, and he thought them beautiful.

As they passed the geologist's camp, they saw him standing with his back to the fire, and he called out good morning to them; then, signing to Hugh to draw near, he said, "Excuse me for asking you, but I suppose you have been to the Upper and Lower Geyser Basins?"

"Well," said Hugh, "we've been to one geyser basin; that one on the way to the falls, but that's the only one we've seen."

"Well," said the geologist, "of course you know your own affairs best, but it seems to me you will make a great mistake if you do not get to the Upper

and Lower Geyser Basins, because it's there that the most wonderful geysers are to be seen."

"Well," said Hugh, "we're travelling through here to see the sights, and I'd be mightily obliged to you if you'd tell me what we'd better do. We are strange to the country, and don't know anything about it."

"I shall be very glad to help you in any way that I can," said the geologist, "and you certainly should not miss the geyser basins. You can follow the trail along the lake here for about twenty miles, and then turn to your right, at the end of the Thumb, and strike northwest across through the timber, to the streams running into the Firehole River, and follow them down, and that will take you to the Lower Geyser Basin; then from there you must travel up the Firehole to the Upper Geyser Basin. Then, if you want to, you can cross over to Shoshone and Lewis Lakes, and go on south, following Snake River, to Jackson's Lake. From there you can go wherever you please, but if you choose to follow up Pacific Creek, and pass through Two Ocean Pass, that will bring you back on the upper Yellowstone, and then you can come down to the lake again."

"Well," said Hugh, "we want to go south, and to get down on the streams that run into the Platte. I reckon we might as well go down to Jackson's Lake the way you say, and then strike across the country, over into the Wind River drainage, and then over onto the Platte."

"Yes, I guess that is one very good way to go if you know the way across the range," said their friend.

"Well," said Hugh, as he started on, "we 'll try to find a way, and anyhow we 're mightily obliged to you for telling us about those two geyser basins, and we 'll sure see them before we go south;" and saying goodbye to their acquaintance, they rode on.

A few miles further along the trail, they came to a natural bridge, spanning a brook which now carried little water, but showed that in the spring it was much larger. The stream had burrowed its way beneath a dike of lava, at right angles to its course, and was bridged by a nearly perfect arch of rock, about six feet thick above the keystone. From the top of the bridge on its lower side to the bed of the stream is about sixty feet, and the bridge is twenty-five feet long, and the arch fifteen feet in width. The lava stands in upright layers, from one to four feet in thickness, and seems to have separated into these thin plates in cooling.

Beyond the bridge, the dim trail which they followed led for the most part through the pleasant green timber, but at midday they passed over several hog-backs, from which the timber had long ago been burned off, most of the tree trunks had rotted away, and only a few charred fragments of the roots remained on the ground. No young growth had sprung up to replace the old, and the ground was bare: not merely bare of timber, but bare even of underbrush, weeds and grass. Exposed for years to the full force of the weather, the rains and melting snows had swept away all the rotted pine needles, twigs and fallen branches which had formed the old forest floor and soil, leaving only the fine lava sand

and gravel, without any soil to support vegetation. Dry, thirsty and desolate, these hog-backs resembled the desert, a barren waste in the midst of the green pine forest.

Hugh turned to Jack and said, "You see, son, what the forest fires may do in these mountains. When the timber burns off, unless there are seeds in the soil to spring up at once, the snow, melting quickly, washes away the soil, and leaves the rock, whether it is solid or broken up fine like this here, uncovered and without the power to support anything. Every year the snow melting quickly washes off a larger tract, and so these little deserts increase in size. The time is coming, I am afraid, when these mountains will all be burned over, and then what the ranchmen down on the prairie are going to do for water for their hay meadows and their crops I don't know."

"But, Hugh," said Jack, "aren't there laws forbidding people to set the timber on fire?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "there's plenty of laws, but the trouble is nobody pays any attention to them."

Toward evening they camped on the shores of the lake, at what Hugh supposed was the Thumb, and he told the boys that the next day he was going to start off northwest through the timber, and try to strike the streams leading down to the Firehole.

Making an early start, they rode up the hill, following a deep ravine through the cool green timber, over ground covered with feathery moss, where the hoofs of the animals made no sound as they struck the ground. Soon the lake was lost to view, and then, on all sides of them rose the tall straight boles of the pine trees.

There seemed not very much life. A few small birds were seen in the tops of the trees. Some gray jays gathered near them when they stopped at mid-day to eat, and uttered soft mellow whistles, and two came down very close to Jack and Joe, and picked up little bits of dried meat that they threw to them.

Soon after they started on, they came to a stream, and following that down, about three or four o'clock rode into the Lower Geyser Basin.

Here was a large wet meadow, with green grass, and plenty of good camping spots; and before long they had the lodge up, and closing the door, started out to make a tour of the basin. The many geysers, large and small, and the wonderful hot springs of surpassing clearness and deep blue color astonished and delighted Hugh and the boys. Many of the springs were very hot, seeming to boil from beneath, bubbles of steam following one another to the surface, and then exploding. One of these large springs, about twenty-five feet long and more than half as wide, gave a vigorous display, beginning first to boil at the middle, and then to spout; at length throwing the water about in all directions, from twenty to forty feet in height. The margins of all these geysers and hot springs were beautifully ornamented with yellow gray and pinkish deposits of stone, which took the form of beads and corals and sponges, and all the tree trunks and branches seen in and near them were partly turned to stone. Close to the geysers were what are called the paint-pots. These are boiling pools of finely divided clay of various colors. The air seemed to be forced up slowly through the thick

fluid, making little puffs, much like those that one would see in a kettle of boiling indian meal. Some of these paint-pots were very large, others small, and they were of a variety of colors—some red, some white, some yellow, and some softly gray. The clay was exceedingly smooth to the touch.

The Geyser Basin was long, and contained a great many wonderful springs and geysers. of which some, like the Grotto, had built up great craters for themselves, twelve or sixteen feet high.

The Grotto was at the end of the Lower Geyser Basin, and from here they turned back to go to their camp. Much talk was had during the evening of the wonderful things that they had seen, and of what they expected to see in the morning.

An early start brought them to the Upper Geyser Basin not long after the sun had risen. Not far from the Grotto which they had seen last night was the Giant, with an enormous crater, from which great volumes of steam were escaping, and where the water could be heard boiling below the surface, and occasionally rising in great jets which splashed over the top. They camped near at hand, and turning out their horses, proceeded on foot to see Old Faithful, the Bee-hive, the Giantess, the Grand, and many other large geysers, besides many hot springs wonderful in color and in the purity of their waters.

Just before they reached Old Faithful, the roar of its discharge was heard, and its wonderful shaft of water was seen rising, by two or three rapid leaps finally to a height of over one hundred feet, with clouds of steam reaching far higher, and drifting off with the wind.

The great column of water maintained its height for fully five minutes, and then, dropping by degrees, it sank down and disappeared. All about the crater the naked shell of silica which surrounds it was flooded with water, so hot that Jack and Joe, who tested it with their fingers, shook them violently and at once thrust them into their mouths. The crater of this geyser is very beautiful. It stands on a little mound and is four or five feet high, and its lips are rounded into many strange and beautiful forms, beaded and shining like glistening pearls, while all about it are little terraced pools of the clearest water, with scalloped and beaded borders. The margins and floors of these pools are tinted with most delicate shades, white, buff, brown and gray, and in many of them are beautiful little pebbles, which are also opalescent.

Many cruel hands had been at work breaking down these beautiful borders, to carry them away, and people who had visited the place had scrawled their names on the smooth pebbles and in the beautiful flooring of the pools.

Hugh said to Jack, "Well, we come from the Indians, and we belong in a cow camp; but we ain't low down enough to spoil pretty things like these, by writing our names on 'em, are we, son?"

"No, Hugh, we 're not," said Jack, "and I'm mighty glad of it. I don't tnink anybody that had any love for pretty things would want to spoil them in this way, or take any of this beautiful bordering away with them. You get these pretty things away from their surroundings, and they are not pretty any longer. It's like picking a beautiful flower and carrying it

away with you ; before you 've got far, it's all faded and gone, and good for nothing except to throw away."

During the day, which seemed to them all too short, the geysers were good to them. The Bee-hive played, throwing up a slender shaft of water to a height of about 200 feet ; the Grand Geyser sent up a stream eighty feet in height ; the Castle played, but its exhibition was not very showy compared with the others that they had seen. But toward afternoon, the greatest of all the geysers, the Giantess, gave an exhibition of her power, throwing up a vast quantity of water, sometimes to a height of one hundred feet. While the geyser was playing, Jack and Joe brought a large tree stump and threw it into the basin, and it was instantly whirled to a height of 200 feet, looking at the last like a tiny piece of wood. The wind, which was blowing, kept the steam and water from going nearly as high as the stump went. The roar of the geyser was tremendous, and its force shook the ground all about, so that those who were looking on were almost afraid.

As they returned to camp that night they saw a party of tourists moving about among the geysers, and passing near they could see that they were busy with axes and a pick, cutting away and prying out the borders of some of the geyser pools. It was an irritating sight, but they could do nothing, and much of the way back to camp was devoted to talking of the wickedness of destroying the beauties of this place, and declaring that the government ought to do something to protect the wonders of the region from the destruction which constantly threatened them.

At night, after supper, they sat in the lodge talking about what they should do to-morrow, and for the following days. Generally, their idea was to travel in a southeasterly direction, and finally to bring up at Mr. Sturgis' ranch; but just how they should go was uncertain. Neither Jack nor Joe had ever before travelled in the mountains, and they were therefore quite dependent on Hugh for advice. Jack said, "Of course, Hugh, we want to get back to the ranch, but then, too, we want to see as much as we can of what there is in the mountains; but I suppose we 'll have to travel by some trail or some road, because we can't take the horses everywhere."

"Well, that's so," said Hugh; "we can't go everywhere, but then again, when you are travelling with a pack train there's mighty few places where you can't go; you 're mighty free and independent when you 're packing. Of course you can't take a pack train up a cut cliff; but, on the other hand, the rough mountains and down timber don't cut much figure; you can pretty much always go round, and keep your general direction. You can go and come about as you want to."

"Well," said Jack, "of course I never travelled before with a pack train in the mountains, but I tell you I like it. It's a mighty pretty sight to see the white packs winding in and out among the timber, or to see them following one another along a narrow ridge, or zigzaging up and down a steep hillside, as we 've seen them since we 've been here in the Park."

"Yes," said Hugh, "it's a nice way to travel; of course it's a little slower than a wagon, and it takes

you some time to load and unload; but then again you can often go straight, instead of going a long way round, and I like it."

"I tell you," said Joe, "I like to watch these horses. I don't know whether they 've ever been in the mountains before, but it seems to me they 're smart. They seem to know a whole lot, and I notice that when they 're going along among the trees, sometimes I see a horse start to go between two trees, where I think there isn't room enough for the pack, but generally they get through. Then, sometimes, going under branches it seems to me that the pack has got to strike the branches, but the horses generally get under them without touching. Of course if they follow old Baldy close, there is always room enough; but now and then that dun horse tries to cut off a corner, and get in ahead of one of the others, and then sometimes I think he's bound to get caught. He only did so once, day before yesterday, and then he went between two trees where there wasn't room enough; then he pushed and pushed and pushed for a long time, and I had to run round in front of him and drive him back, and then he got out."

"Yes," said Hugh, "horses that are used to the mountains, or mules or burros, get to be mighty smart in going through thick timber, and if the packs are properly put on, there isn't likely to be much trouble, unless you strike down timber. Of course, down timber is bad."

"Well, what is down timber, Hugh?" said Jack. "I've heard of places in the woods back east where a hurricane goes along and tears up all the trees in a

strip for miles in length. They call that a wind-fall there. Is that the way down timber is made here?'

"No," said Hugh, "we've plenty of wind here, but it don't often act that way. Down timber comes like this: say that you have a rough and rocky mountain side, where the timber stands thick, most of the trees will be from six to ten inches in diameter, but they 'll all be pretty near of a size. Now, suppose a fire passes over this, and kills all these trees; likely it doesn't burn them to amount to anything, but it's hot enough to sort o' cook the sap, and kill the trees. They 'll stand there naked, with the bark gradually drying up and peeling off them, maybe for twenty, thirty or forty years; and likely while they 're standing there, there 'll be a new growth of young pines springing up among them, and grow to quite a height. But after a while these dead trees get white and weathered, and the dead roots that hold them in the ground keep on rotting and rotting, and at last these roots become so weak that there's nothing to support the tall trunk that stands there, and then with every big wind that comes blowing along, some of the trees get blown over, and fall to the ground. They don't all fall at once, but some may fall to-day with a south wind, and some may fall next week with a west wind, and some the week after with a north wind. In this way they 're falling all the time, and in all sorts of directions, and presently the timber will lie piled up on the ground there, criss-cross in all directions. Now, if the logs are not more than a foot or two above the ground, and don't lie too close together, you can take your train through them, but if they

lie three or four feet high, of course the horses can't step or jump over them, and you've either got to go winding round among them, picking out the low places where the animals can get across, or else you've got to chop your way through, or else you've got to back out and go round. That's down timber."

"But Hugh," said Jack, "I should think it would be kind of dangerous to ride through one of those patches of dead timber when the wind is blowing; they might fall on you."

"Well," said Hugh, "so they might. I've sometimes had to ride through a patch of that timber when the trees were falling all about, but I never happened to have one fall on me, nor on any animal that I was driving. The chances are mighty few that you 'll get hit. I mind one time a big tree fell, with the top about twenty feet from one of my animals, and threw dirt and splinters all about him. The horse was scared a whole lot, and ran away; but of course I got him again."

CHAPTER VIII

ACROSS THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

THE next morning they made an early start, and following up the Firehole, turned up a branch coming in from the east, only a short distance beyond Old Faithful. They purposed to go over to Shoshone Lake, and camp there, and to do this they must pass over the Continental Divide, for the Firehole finds its way through the Madison River, and the Missouri, to the Atlantic Ocean, while the waters of the Shoshone Lake fall into Snake River, then into the Columbia, and so at last reach the Pacific.

The way was pleasant, through park-like openings and green timber, and the distance not great. There was no trail, but they followed up a narrow grassy valley, whose slopes on either side were clothed with pines.

At last, when Hugh thought they must be near the Divide, they found down timber, and began to wind about among the logs. Little by little, however, matters grew worse, and presently a stick was encountered over which old Baldy could not step, but on which he caught his foot and almost fell. Here all hands dismounted, and getting an ax out of a pack, Hugh and the boys went ahead, and by lifting some of the larger sticks, and breaking smaller ones, and a

little chopping, a way was soon made by which the horses could pass along.

Beyond this timber was an open and almost level country, which Hugh declared was the Divide, and passing along a little further, they began to go down a gentle hill. Here there were park-like meadows and low wooded hills on either side. There were a few little gullies, but no water; and in the dry stream-beds and water-holes were many tracks of elk, all made in the spring when the ground was soft. From the summit of this Divide, when snows are melting in the early summer, little trickles of water pour down the opposite sides of the mountains, some to the north, to find their way into the Firehole; others south toward Snake River. Hugh followed the general direction of one of these water-courses, which constantly grew larger, and presently turned into one still wider, whose sandy bottom was dotted with great blocks of black lava. Hugh pointed out these to the boys, and said to them, "That's the stuff that in old times many of the Indians used to make their arrow points from. It must have been a great article of trade, for away up north of the boundary line I have seen little piles of chips of that black glass lying on the prairie, where men have been making arrow-heads, and I know that there wasn't any of the rock within 400 miles."

All along the valley of this dry stream was a beautiful park of gently rolling country, with timbered knolls and open grassy intervales. Some of the trees were very large — two or three feet in diameter.

It was early in the afternoon when they reached

Shoshone Lake, and riding along its smooth, firm beach, camped in a little point of spruces. The lake was large, and looked as if it should have a fish in it. Jack got out his rod and put it together, and standing it against a tree, went back into the open meadow where the horses were feeding, to catch grasshoppers. He caught half a dozen, and then, returning, fished faithfully for quite a long distance along the shore, but without success. Neither could he see anywhere that fish were rising, and he wondered whether it could be possible that this beautiful lake, which seemed an ideal home for trout, should have none in it. Joe, on the other hand, as soon as camp had been made, had taken his rifle and started out on foot, working along the edge of the lake and looking for game. He found many old elk tracks and a very few made by deer, but went quite a long distance without seeing anything. Then, turning away from the shore of the lake, and taking the hill-side at some distance from it, he began to work back to the camp. Here there were more deer tracks, but none that seemed worth while for him to follow, and he began to feel discouraged. When he had come almost opposite the camp he crossed a wide dry water-course, going now rather carelessly, though still making no noise, yet not trying to keep out of sight. As he climbed the gentle slope, after crossing the little valley, and had almost reached the top, he stopped, and turned about and looked backward, and there to his astonishment saw, projecting above a patch of low willows and weeds, the heads of two fawns. They were staring at him most innocently, but the camp needed

meat, and bringing his rifle to his shoulder he fired at the neck of one of them, and the little deer disappeared, while the other turned about and raced away through the brush.

Going to the place Joe found the fawn quite a small one, though it had already lost its spotted coat. He dressed it, and then throwing it on his shoulders walked quickly to the camp. As he came in front of the lodge, Hugh said to him, "Hello, Joe, what have you got there, a jack rabbit?"

"Well," said Joe, "it is not much bigger, but it's the only thing I have seen except another of the same size, and that I could not shoot at."

That night as the sun went down the wind began to blow a fresh dry wholesome breeze from the west. The wind raised quite a sea on the lake, and big waves tumbled up on the beach one after another, so fast that it was not an easy matter to get a bucket of water without at the same time getting a wet foot. Jack and Joe walked along the beach a little way.

"Do you know, Joe," said Jack, "this looks to me just like the seashore; the wind blows in the same way, and the waves have the same white-caps, and the surf roars as it pounds on the beach; and there is the moon on the water. Why it seems to me just like some nights I have walked on the beach, back east on the Long Island shore."

"Well," said Joe, "it's not like anything I ever saw before. Up in our country we don't have sand beaches like this, though we do have the lake, and the waves and the wind."

The animals were packed early next day, and they

followed the shores of the lake southward. In some places they could see where elk had passed along recently, and there were tracks of bulls and cows and calves. In some places, too, along the beach the pines, which were small yet looked old, were all bent toward the eastward, and had no branches on the western side. Joe pointed these trees out to Hugh and said, "Why is it Hugh that these trees seem all bent one way, and have no branches on the other side; is it the wind?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "the wind. You'll see that in lots of places, especially on mountain tops, and along big waters like this, where the wind blows mostly from the west and northwest, and gets a wide sweep."

The wind was still blowing hard, and the lake was in a turmoil. The air was cold, and all hands wore their coats as they rode along.

A day's journey took them by Shoshone Lake and Lewis Lake, and they camped below it on Lewis Fork. For much of the distance the trail passed through an attractive open country, full of streams and springs, and dotted with clumps of thick willow brush; while on the higher lands were the ever-present pines. To the left was the lofty ridge of the Red Mountain Range, down which half a hundred beautiful cascades hurried toward the river. To the right was the stream, and beyond the steep sides of the Pitchstone Plateau, so called from the black glossy fragments of the lava rock, of which the soil is largely made up. It was evident that this would be a hard trail in the early spring, for it was low and wet, and animals

would have trouble in passing over it at any except the dry season.

A few miles below the camp they began to look for a ford. The stream looked deep and difficult, yet it was necessary for them to cross it, for on the east side the mountains came down close to the river in a steep and impassable jumble of slide rock. Just above them they could see a great water-fall, not far below the lake. It was now getting toward night, and Hugh was a little uncertain whether to cross this stream, or to camp on this side. However, he determined to cross, and stopping, had the boys catch up the pack animals, while he rode into the stream to prospect for a ford. He kept diagonally down the river, going very slowly, and feeling for the shoalest places, but at last, reached the opposite bank and climbed out. Then, turning about, he recrossed, and telling the boys to keep the horses close to him, he led them into the stream. The ford was rather deep, the water coming more than half way up the horses' bodies, so that they all tucked their feet up behind them on the saddle, and rode along with some anxiety, lest a false step or a stumble over the great stones which formed the river bottom should throw down one of the animals, and so wet either a pack or a rider. However, the crossing was made safely, and then climbing the steep hill, they kept on through the timber, soon, however, camping by a little spring, in an opening where there was food for the animals.

By the time camp was made, the sun had set and it was too late to hunt. The little deer had all been

eaten, and once more they made their meal on dried meat and back-fat.

The next day they kept on through the green timber, riding over ridges and at a distance from the stream, though now and then they had glimpses of its dark hurrying waters. To the right were seen some little lakes, one of them covered with water-fowl. Across the trail that they were following — if it could be called a trail — was some fallen timber, but nothing that delayed them. Jack noticed that some of the living trees were curiously bent in their growth, sometimes at right angles to the vertical a foot or two from the ground, the trunk growing six inches or a foot horizontally, and then turning once more straight toward the sky, the remainder of the tree being straight as an arrow. In some cases the bend was more than this, the tree growing straight up for a foot, and then turning over, growing down for a few inches or a foot, and then making another curve, and growing upright once more. Some of these curves were almost shaped like the letter S, and Jack kept wondering what caused these bends. As they stopped at mid-day to unsaddle and let the horses feed and to eat something themselves, Jack asked Hugh about the curious way in which these trees grew.

Hugh smiled and said, "I don't much wonder you ask about that, son. I remember that I used to think about that a good deal, and wonder how it happened. But it is easy enough to explain if you once get onto it, and you can easily enough get onto it if you travel around through the mountains enough.

"You know I told you the other day, 'he continued, "that when a country has been burned over, the trees stand for a good many years, and then they commence to fall in all directions. Likely enough before they begin to fall, a whole lot of young trees and sprouts have started from the ground, and are growing among them. Now, nothing is more likely than that some of these falling trees may happen to fall upon these young saplings and sprouts. Some of them they smash down flat, and the sprout dies; but sometimes they fall so as just to bend a sprout over, or so that a little small sprout just growing is bound to grow up against the log as the sprout grows larger. These young trees are springy and bend easily. Of course the ones that are smashed down and broken off short are killed; we never hear anything more of them. But likely enough there are some young and hardy plants caught beneath the tops or branches of the fallen trees within a foot or two of the ground, and not much hurt but just held down. Sometimes these little trees are pressed flat to the ground, and when they are, they usually die. But if they are only bent over a few inches, or a foot or two from the ground, they don't always die. Instead of that they keep on growing, and of course the top of the growing tree keeps on reaching up all the time toward the light. No matter if it is bent flat, it tends to turn upward, so that all of it beyond the place where the dead tree is pressing on it grows straight, just like all the other trees around it. Then, after a while the dead stick which is holding the young tree down, rots, and at last disappears. The injured tree grows larger and larger,

and at last gets to be a big tree; and there is then nothing to show how this big tree should have grown in such a bent, queer fashion."

"Well now, Hugh, that's mighty interesting," said Jack, "and I ought to have worked it out for myself, for three or four times to-day I saw dead trees pressing little green sprouts over to one side; but I never thought about that being the reason for the bends in these big trees. The fact is, I never thought of them bending while the trees were young, but supposed it must be some accident or disease that had struck the trees after they were big."

"Well," said Hugh, "you see it's all simple enough, if you understand it."

"Simple!" said Jack, "Why it's simple as rolling off a log; but you 've got to understand the reason."

"Well," said Hugh, "you keep your eyes open as you ride through the timber, and you 'll see the very thing I've been talking about, happening before your face all the time."

The wind blew fiercely all day long, though when they were in the timber they hardly felt it, and only the sighing of the pines and occasionally the crash of some distant tree told of the force of the gale. They crossed Snake River about noon, and kept on southward. During a halt at the river all hands went to the fishing, and caught some splendid trout, which they promptly cooked and which gave them a delicious meal. A little more fishing furnished them with enough fish for two or three meals more, and Jack was hard at work trying to catch a big one that he had seen rise, when he saw two great shadows on the

water, and looking up, saw only a few yards above him a pair of great sand-hill cranes. They were not in the least afraid, and flying on a little further, alighted in the meadow where they fed, walking about in most dignified fashion until the train started on again, and alarmed them.

As they went into camp that afternoon at a little spring, Hugh said to the boys, "Now, look here; if one of you don't go out pretty soon and kill something, I'll have to do that myself. This camp needs fresh meat. Dried meat and back-fat is good; fish are good; but we want either a deer or an elk; or, better still, if you can find it, a buffalo; but I reckon these bison here in the mountains are a little too smart for any of us. They're pretty scarce, and they're pretty watchful."

"Well," said Jack, "which one of us shall go? We can't both go, because one has got to stay and help drive the animals. I'll toss up with you, Joe, to see which shall hunt to-morrow morning."

"All right," said Joe, "I'll toss up;" but as no one of them had a coin, Jack took a fresh chip, and rubbing some black earth on one side of it, said, "We'll call that black side heads, and the other tails; and Hugh will throw the chip. You call, Joe." Hugh tossed the chip into the air, and Joe called heads. But the chip came down the clean side up, and so Jack was to go hunting next morning.

As soon as the animals were packed, Jack started off, keeping to the right of the trail and up the hill. He knew, of course, that at this time of the year the elk were likely to be found high up, and the deer,

too; for the flies and mosquitoes were bad. The underbrush was thick, and there were many marshy places, and once this hillside had been covered with a great forest, for it was strewn with logs. The underbrush seemed higher and thicker than he had been accustomed to, and he saw many sorts of plants that he did not remember to have seen before; and at last it struck him that perhaps as he was now on the western side of the Continental Divide, the rain-fall might be greater, and that this might make a difference in the vegetation. Willow and alders, and other brush, made riding rather difficult, and besides that, the hillsides grew steeper and steeper, until at last Jack dismounted, and clambering up on foot, left Pawnee to follow, as he had long ago been trained to do. Getting up on a high ridge, bald now, though once forest-grown, for the ground was strewn with great charred and rotting tree-trunks, long before killed by fire, he followed the ridge toward higher land, and gradually climbing, at last reached a commanding height, from which he saw the beautiful Jackson's Lake, and its lovely surroundings.

To the eastward the Red Mountain Ridge, rising above him, cut off the view, but northeast he could see the valley of Snake River, broad near at hand, but narrowing further off, until the mountains, closing in, hid the silver ribbon of the stream's course. To the west were the splendid gray and white masses of the Teton range, low and rounded toward the north, with long easy ridges of moderate steepness, and crowned with great fields of snow. Toward the southward the mountains became more and more abrupt,

until at last the highest peak of all, Jack knew must be the Grand Teton. From this pinnacle the ridge gradually sank away again, becoming lower and lower in the blue and misty distance. Immediately under the ridge, and south of where Jack stood, was Jackson's Lake. He had often heard Hugh speak of Jackson's Hole and Jackson's Lake, spots for many years hardly known to white men, and about which most marvelous stories were told. Here, men used to say — the miners that the streams were paved with nuggets of gold, the trappers that the rivers and forests abounded in fur, the hunters that game was so abundant and so tame that there was always plenty to eat, and the camp never starved; and now this wonderful region lay before him.

And yet he knew that within the past few years many people had passed through this place. He knew that the miners had washed the sands of the rivers, but found that they did not pay; that trappers had caught the beaver and the marten, and had soon trapped almost all of them. Now it was for him to find whether the game was as plenty as had been said.

At all events, Jackson's Lake with the wide meadows that surrounded it, and the superb mountains that walled it in on one side, made this a lovely spot. The lake shone in the sunlight like a sheet of silver, and was dotted with pine-clad islands. On the west its waters flowed close beneath the great mountains which rose above it, but on the other three sides a belt of forest grew close to the water, and back of this belt, broad meadow lands, with groups of trees and low rounded clumps of willows, looked almost

like a park. Further to the eastward bare ridges rose higher and higher, forming the foothills of the main range, and still further to the east and southeast were massive mountains, more distant — and so seeming lower — than the Teton Range, but which were the Continental Divide. Jack looked, and looked, and enjoyed this beautiful view; but after a little he realized that time was passing, and that he must move on, and do his hunting, and get to camp.

He crossed the ridge, and began to ride down the side of the mountain toward the south, following the crest of a hog-back, which would take him down to the valley of the lake by a gentle slope. Below, and to his left, was a narrow valley, in which stood green timber, and among the green timber much that was dead and much that was down.

CHAPTER IX

AN ELK HUNT UNDER THE TETONS

HE was riding along slowly, letting Pawnee make his own way among the loose rocks and tree-trunks, when he caught sight of an animal standing with its tail toward him, in a little opening among the trees. For an instant he thought it was a buckskin horse, and the idea flashed through his mind that there must be a camp down there. Almost before the thought had taken form, the animal moved a little, and he saw that it was an elk. He slipped off his horse on the side furthest from the animal, and led Pawnee out of sight behind a clump of pines, and left him there. Then he crept back to the ridge. In the timber below he soon made out half-a-dozen elk, and as he watched, he could see quite a large bunch of cows and calves. He lay there, watching and waiting. The drop down the hill into the valley was very steep, and he was hoping that the elk might move into some position where he would not have to go down to them. They seemed uneasy and suspicious, and presently something startled them, and they ran a little way, and then stopped, looking back up the valley. Two big heifers stood almost side by side facing opposite ways, with their shoulders close together, and their heads in such position that their necks seemed

to cross. Jack raised his gun and took a careful sight at the necks, just below the heads, and pulled the trigger. One of the cows dropped instantly, while the other, standing a moment to look, turned and ran off. He heard the elk crashing through the timber of the valley, and then saw them climbing the bald hills on the other side, stopping every little while to look back, and at last walking slowly off over the hills.

A convenient side ridge gave Pawnee a good road down to where the cow had fallen, but she had rolled far down the hill, and finally had stopped on a little level place. She was quite dead. The animal was rather large for Jack to handle, but with some trouble he managed to cut off her hams and sirloins, and tying the two hams together by the gambrel joints, he balanced them on his saddle, and then tying the sirloins on behind, set out on foot for camp. There was much scrambling up steep hillsides, and down others quite as steep, and some working through the thick underbrush, before he came out into the open lake valley. Here progress was more rapid. Jack walked swiftly, and Pawnee followed close behind. After a time he came on the trail made by the pack train, some hours before, and hurrying along this, presently saw in the distance what looked like a house. Before he reached it, however, the trail that he was following turned sharply to the right, and led down toward the river, two or three miles below the lake.

As he approached the tall cotton-wood timber, which he supposed grew on the shores of the river, he saw the horses feeding close to it, and before long the

cone of the lodge showed through the leaves, and a little later he stopped by the fire.

"Good boy," said Hugh. "I'm mighty glad to get that meat. That'll keep us going for quite a while, and now that we've got fresh meat, and dried meat and fish, we're bound to live well."

"Animal's in good order, too," he continued, as he began to lift the meat from the saddle. "I expect you picked out a heifer, didn't you?"

"Well," said Jack, "I tried to, but I wasn't sure that it wasn't an old cow until I put a knife into her. The only thing I was sure of was that she had no calf."

"Well," said Hugh, "it's a nice piece of meat, and I'm mighty glad you got it."

"What's that house that I see up there, Hugh? Nobody lives here now, does there?"

"No," said Hugh, "I reckon that's some kind of a shelter or stable, built by hunters or prospectors, for their horses in fly-time. Flies are pretty bad here now, and I reckon close about this lake the green-heads must be enough to drive the horses crazy. I noticed to-day when we were crossing some points of that meadow up above that they were bad. If it hadn't been for that, I reckon we'd have camped up there by the lake. It's an awful sightly spot, but there were too many flies."

Supper was almost ready, and they feasted royally that night on trout and the fat sirloins of the elk; and after the meal was over, it was pleasant to sit round the big camp-fire that Jack and Joe built out in front of the lodge, and watch the blaze, and listen to the murmur of the river as it hurried over the stones, just

beyond the camp. Every stick tossed on the burning pile sent a great cloud of sparks soaring upward to disappear among the dark green foliage of the spruces, which here grew among the taller cottonwoods. The warmth of the fire was grateful; the willows and cottonwoods and spruces all about their camp sheltered them from the strong wind which still blew down the valley; and Jack, as he lay stretched out on the ground between Joe and Hugh, thought that he never could have a happier time than that very moment.

"Now, boys," said Hugh, "I don't know how you feel about it, but it strikes me this is a terrible nice place to stop for a day or two. This is a good camp, and these mountains right opposite to us are things I like to look at. What do you say to our stopping here, say for one day, anyhow; and maybe to-morrow we'll take a little ride across the river, and get closer to these mountains, and see something of what they look like. I'd like mighty well to look at them long enough to kind o' carry a remembrance of them back with me to the ranch."

"Well," said Jack, "let's do that. There's no reason for our hurrying; we've got plenty of grub, and I think we'd all like to stay here for one day, anyhow."

"Now, there's two things we can do," said Hugh. "We ain't made up our minds how we'll go home; but we can cross the range in a whole lot of different places. We can either follow down Snake River for a way, and then work up one of the creeks, and go over and strike the head of Wind River, and follow that down, or we can go back to the park, and then cut

across, and get down onto Stinking Water, and then go back on the prairie. My idea is that we'll do better to keep on south, and try to go straight on our course. We can either go up Buffalo Fork, and then strike across to the head of the Wind River, and follow that down; or go down and follow up the Gros Ventre, and get across some way there. We don't have to make up our minds to-day; we can settle that to-morrow night. Let's agree that we'll stop here to-morrow, and then to-morrow night decide what we'll do."

"All right," said both boys.

When the three friends got up next morning, and went to the stream to wash, they could see nothing of the great range beneath which they were camped, for the tall spruce trees which grew on the opposite bank cut off the view of everything beyond. After breakfast they saddled up and having picketed two of the pack horses, set out to cross the river, and to get nearer to the mountains. The river was wide, and so deep that the water came almost up to the saddle blankets, but they crossed comfortably enough, and riding through the open dry timber of the bottom, before long were approaching the high bluffs which formed the first terrace above the river. In the bottom were many tracks of deer and elk, some of the deer tracks quite fresh; and they almost rode over a huge old porcupine, which waddled awkwardly to one side, and then stopped among some low rose bushes, with its head between its forefeet, its quills erect, and its tail thrashing about in a threatening way. Jack stopped his horse and said to Hugh:

"Hugh, is there anything in that story that porcupines throw their quills? I've heard lots of people say it is so, and then other people say it isn't."

Hugh drew his horse up, and turning in his saddle said, "Why no, son, there's nothing in that; though I've heard plenty of men who ought to know a heap better say that there was. Take a stick and go right up close to that fellow, and poke him with it, and then bring it to me."

Jack picked up a dead branch, and going to the porcupine, poked him in the sides and back, and when he did this the porcupine thrashed his tail about more vigorously than ever, and two or three times struck the stick. Leaving him, Jack went to Hugh, carrying the stick in his hand, and Hugh said, "Look at the end of that stick now, and see those quills." The end of the stick was pierced by a dozen or twenty sharp, strong quills, and Jack, taking hold of one and trying to pull it out, found that the point was firmly fastened in the wood, so that it required quite a little effort to pull it out.

"Now, son," said Hugh, "a porcupine, as you have seen, is slow, and can't run away. His back and sides and tail are covered with these quills, which are mighty sharp, and which have little stickers pointing back toward the root, so that if a quill gets fast in the flesh, it is a very hard matter to pull it out again. If a quill gets stuck in an animal's head or foot, it keeps working forward all the time; it never works backward and comes out; it has to go through to the other side. Most animals know that it isn't good to fool with a porcupine. The only way to kill him is to

turn him over on his back, and get at his throat and belly, which are not covered with quills. When a porcupine sees an animal coming he holds his body close to the ground, makes his quills stand up all over him, and thrashes around with his tail, which is pretty well covered with quills too. His tail is strong, and he can hit a hard blow with it; and so you see he's pretty well defended. The quills are not set deep in the skin; they are loose, and they pull out mighty easy; you see that just by poking the porcupine you got that stick full of quills. Sometimes when he thrashes hard with his tail he may hit a piece of wood, or may knock loose some of the quills on his tail so that they may fly a little distance; but as for throwing them any distance from his body, or with any force, why he can't do it.

"I have had dogs that would tackle porcupines, and when they did, it was a terrible job to pull the quills out of them."

"Well," said Jack, "I'm glad to hear all that I've been told of dogs tackling porcupines, up in the Adirondacks, but I never saw one that had been pierced by quills."

"Most dogs," said Hugh, "soon learn never to bother porcupines, but some seem never to learn, and will go for one every time they see it. Bears sometimes tackle them, and so do lynx and panthers, but they say the greatest animal of all to kill a porcupine is a fisher. I've seen two or three panthers with their jaws full of quills. I've heard people say that the fisher kills them by turning them over on their backs and then jumping onto the belly, but I never saw this

done What I have seen is fishers with lots of quills in their bodies: some in the legs, some in the belly, and some in the sides. And the Indians say that these quills don't bother them at all; that is to say, that a fisher full of quills don't swell up the way a dog or a panther does. The porcupine is a pretty stupid beast, but its effect on its neighbors is quite interesting"

Jack listened with much attention to this lesson in natural history, and they mounted and rode on again.

Soon they came to a great slough, evidently an old beaver meadow, and as Hugh drew up his horse and looked at it, he shook his head:—"Too soft for us to cross, I reckon, we'll have to go round some other way. There's plenty of sloughs and mud-holes in there where our horses would go out of sight."

They turned northward, and for the next two hours were occupied in trying to make their way out to the high prairie. At frequent intervals they came to what looked like a tongue of hard dry land extending out to the bluffs, but after following it for a little distance they found at its end a mud-hole, which obliged them to turn back and take another road. At length they reached a strip of hard ground which led them to the bluffs; and just before they rode up the steep ascent, Hugh's horse started from the ground a brood of grouse, which scattered in all directions, many of them alighting on the willows and spruce branches close to them. They were singularly tame, almost as much so as the fool hens they had seen farther north, and Jack rode up to within three or four feet of one, and then reached out his gun to touch it, but before

the muzzle was within a foot of the bird, it flew away.

When they reached the higher prairie they rode off toward the range, which was now plainly to be seen. There were three principal peaks, the names of which Hugh gave them. One, he said, was Mount Moran, a great square-topped mass of granite, with two or three vast snow or ice banks on its north face. To the south of that were the three pinnacles of the Tetons, whose slender summits ran far up into the blue sky. The prairie over which they were now riding was uneven:—here cut by dry, grassy, ancient water-ways, there with mounds of great extent rising above the general level. There was much gravel—some of it very large—which looked as if it might have been carried down by the water. Long ridges composed wholly of this gravel ran for long distances out from the foot of the range, and were now for the most part bare of timber, having been burned over. On some of them the fire had spared many of the pines, and young aspen timber grew on their slopes. The terraces of the river's flood-plain rose one above another, and on the highest of all, on the west side, were groups of evergreen trees, and now and then a single pine standing alone in the wide sage-plain. Scattered about over the prairie were many antelope.

They rode on toward the mountains, trying to get up high enough so as to look down on Jackson's Lake, which runs in close to the foot of Mount Moran; but the ridges became higher and higher, more and more timber grew on them, and cut off the view, so that at length they gave up the effort and

turned off to one side to ride through the timber. Here were many fresh elk tracks and trails, some made the night before, and some since daylight ; and here, quite unexpectedly, as they rode over a ridge a little higher than any that they had yet passed, a fine view was had of the southern end of Jackson's Lake. It seemed to wind and twist about among its points and islands, and sent out long and narrow finger-like bays into the hills in a most curious way. A little further on they saw from a hill-top another lake, not nearly so large as Jackson's, but still perhaps two miles long. It was surrounded by dense forest, and reflected the great peaks which overhung it. Here they dismounted for a while to look at the range, which was now plainly seen.

"Big mountains, ain't they, son?" said Hugh, as they sat there looking up at them.

"Yes, Hugh," said Jack, "they're awful big, and how bare and gray they are. There seems to be a little timber in small patches, but except for that, there doesn't seem to be anything growing on them at all ; they are just rocks with snow on top and in the ravines."

"Well," said Hugh, "I expect for the most part that rock is so steep that the snow can't lie there. Even if the wind don't blow, just as soon as any weight of snow falls on the rocks it slips off.

"Have you got your glasses with you, son?" he continued, and when Jack had handed them to him, he looked through them and said : "I thought so. Do you know, son, that snow up there in those highest ravines isn't snow at all, it's ice ; just like them

glaciers that we have up there in the mountains to the north. Look through the glasses, and you can see the cracks on the lower border, and you can see too that it is blue, and not white like snow."

Jack and Joe both looked through the glasses and saw what Hugh meant, and both were reminded of the masses of ice that they had seen in the mountains of the north, the year before.

It was pleasant. sitting in the warm sun and looking up at this wonderful scenery, but at last they caught up their horses, and mounted and rode back to the camp. As they were going along side by side, down the wide point of a ridge, a great brown deer bounced out from an aspen thicket on Joe's side and ran down the ravine. Joe sprang from his horse and raised his gun to shoot, but just as he did so she sprang into a little gully, so that Joe could see only her ears as she raced along. She followed the ravine down and was not seen again.

Hugh and Jack both laughed at Joe, and told him that he should have stayed on his horse, for from their point of view on horse-back, the doe's body had been in sight for quite time enough to shoot.

When they reached the level bottom, they rode out close to the river, and keeping along the bank found firm ground all the way to the camp. There remained still some hours of daylight, and both boys got out their lines and began to fish, catching a number of fine and heavy trout. Just as they were about to go to camp with their catch, a flock of seven wild geese flew up the river, calling loudly, and after they had passed a little beyond the boys, Joe began to honk in

response, and presently the great birds turned about and came back, flying directly over the boys, looking down at them, as if to see who it was that was talking to them. The air was cool and damp after dark and they sat about the fire in the lodge. A great horned owl a little way down the river was hooting regularly, and Joe said, "We're going to have a storm."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I hear him now, and I heard him last night. I reckon we're going to have change of weather."

"What do you mean, Hugh?" said Jack, "has the owl anything to do with the weather?"

"Well no, son, I don't know that he has; but some of the Indians say that if you hear an owl calling it means a storm's coming."

It was raining the next morning when Jack thrust his head from under his blankets, and as the fire had not been started, and nobody seemed to be moving, he knew that this day also would be spent in camp. When he went out of the lodge the ground was covered with an inch of very wet snow, and the weather seemed to be trying to make up its mind whether it would rain or no. Big wet flakes were falling in a mixture of rain and snow, and moisture was everywhere.

After breakfast, Hugh cut some crotches and poles, and with the ropes and two of the mantas made a very good shelter, under which they built an outdoor fire. By this they sat for a long time, discussing various matters, and then, since the rain had stopped, Jack went down to the stream and began to fish. He caught a few fish weighing from three quarters of a

pound to a pound, and there were enough of them to make it interesting. The small ones seemed to trouble his hook very little, and one or two little ones that he caught he shook off before getting them to shore. Suddenly, after a long cast that he had made out toward the middle of the stream, a huge fish rose to his fly, but in its eagerness, missed and sprang over the fly showing its full length out of the water. This was such a fish as Jack had not seen before, and he was very anxious to get it. He cast again over the same spot, and this time drew in his line a little more slowly. The great fish rose again, and just at the right moment Jack struck, and had him fast.

For a moment the fish did nothing, but then came a fight the like of which Jack had never witnessed. The fish made a strong rush toward the deepest water of the rapid, and twice on his way there he sprang into the air, shaking his head savagely to rid himself of the steel that was biting his jaw. Then he turned about and rushed back toward the bank, again throwing himself out of the water. Jack was excited, but was trying to keep cool. Whenever the fish gave him an opportunity he took in line, and when the fish ran he gave him as little as possible.

Suddenly the trout started down the river at great speed, so fast that Jack was afraid to check him, and started racing after him, running over the slippery stones of the beach, and through the pools of water left by the river. Presently the fish stopped, and refused to move, and Jack recovered all the line that he could, and then began to try to move the fish. Now it began to give a series of tugging jerks on the

line, as if it were bending itself from side to side in the water; then it began to throw itself over and over, as if trying to twist the line; and then it would rush off, as if striving to break it. As the splendid fish grew tired, Jack worked it nearer and nearer to the beach; but he had no net and of course could not lift it from the water. After looking about a little he found a place where the beach was shelving, and laying down his rod, he drew the fish out by the leader and soon had it safely in his hand. It was a handsome fish, deep and thick, and yet graceful in all its lines, and it seemed to Jack as big as a North River shad. As soon as it was killed, Jack took his rod and started back to the camp for he wished to show them there the biggest trout that he had ever seen.

White clouds hung low over the valley and hid the mountains on either side; but as Jack walked along the beach the western sky grew lighter, and for a few moments the sun struggled to shine through the clouds. Then suddenly, far down the valley the white wall that shut out the view broke away, and Jack could see the great mountain mass of the Teton Range. He stopped and gazed, waiting for the rent to close up again. Through it he could see, like a picture in its frame, the mountains, not dark and gray as they had been yesterday, but white now, in all the purity of new-fallen snow. As he looked, the break in the clouds moved rapidly northward, exposing one mountain after another, each seeming more beautiful than the one seen just before. A wreath of mist hung around and concealed the needle peak of

the Grand Teton, adding to, rather than taking away from its height. The rift in the clouds passed northward, and after it had shown him Mount Moran, it closed again and the white vapor cut off the view. Jack had seen the glories of the Tetons, snow-clad. He returned to camp.

CHAPTER X

TRAILING BLACK-TAILS

It was pleasant that night after supper was over, as they lay about the bright fire in the lodge. During the afternoon, while Jack had been fishing, Joe had split fine a lot of dry cottonwood sticks, and a good pile of them lay within the lodge door, just to its left. The fire blazed and crackled merrily and the draft was good, so that there was no smoke even in the top of the lodge.

Joe said to Jack, "Jack, have you seen all this old beaver work up north of the camp?"

"No," said Jack, "I have seen plenty of small beaver cuttings. There have been lots of beaver here, but I haven't seen any big work."

"Well," said Joe, "you'd better go up fifty yards from the camp, and you'll see there bigger trees cut down by the beaver than I've ever seen, and I've seen some beaver work in my day. Why, there's cottonwood logs there cut down by the beaver that are bigger round than my body, and I believe they're more than a foot through. You surely ought to see them."

"Well," said Jack, "I will in the morning."

"This used to be a great place for fur, didn't it Hugh?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "I expect when the white men first came in here that beaver were awful plenty. Wherever I've been since I came into this valley I've seen lots of old work but not much new work. All the same, these sticks that Joe is talking about are not very old; they were cut down only a few years ago. I guess 'twas a great fur country. But, Lord! I've told you about the stories that people used to tell about Jackson's Lake. They used to say that pretty nearly everything good in the mountains was to be found here, and plenty of it.

"Do you know, boys," Hugh continued, "I've about made up my mind what we'd better do? Now, we don't know the country here, none of us, but I expect we can find our way around pretty well with the pack-train. I think the best thing we can do is to go back to that last big creek that we crossed, and follow that up to its head; then cross the mountains there, and get over onto Wind River; and then we can follow Wind River down; and then over and strike Sweetwater, and follow Sweetwater down to the Platte; and then, you know, we're pretty near home. What do you say? Would either of you rather go any other way, or will you leave it that way?"

The boys sat silent for a little while, and then Joe said, "I think it will be good to do as Hugh says; he is the leader, and we will follow him."

"I think so, too," said Jack. "Neither of us boys knows anything about the country, and we want to do just what you think is best, Hugh."

"Well," said Hugh, "I guess that is best, and if you say so, we'll do it; and we'll start to-morrow

morning if the weather is good and the things are dry."

"All right," said both boys.

The next morning saw the little train following its back trail up Snake River for a few miles, when Hugh turned off to the right, and entered the valley of a great stream which rushed down from the Red Mountain Range. The hills were low and rounded and composed of sand and gravel, covered with grass and sage-brush. On either side, from time to time, the stream had cut into the hills and washed away the gravel, and its bed was full of huge boulders; so that it was necessary for them to keep back on the ridge, at some distance from the water. The river was so large and along it there were so many evidences of a vast body of water running down through this valley in the spring, that it seemed evident that it must be a very long stream, and must drain a wide area of country. Before they had gone very far, the sun, which had been shining, went behind clouds; it began to rain hard; and before long they began to get wet. Early in the day, therefore, Hugh drew up his horse in the shelter of some spruces on a little bench about thirty feet above the valley, and said, "Let's camp, boys, and get out of this wet." It took but a little time to put up the lodge, to unsaddle, get things covered and a fire in the lodge, and also one outside under a shelter of manta, so that they were soon dry and comfortable again. Jack tried the fishing, but the fish would not bite. The rain continued, and by the middle of the afternoon had changed to snow, and before dark the ground was white. When they went

to bed at night the snow was still falling and the weather was growing colder.

The next morning the snow had stopped, but it was two or three inches deep on the ground. Everything was wet, and it looked as if it might snow again at any time. Jack got tired of sitting round the fire, and watching Hugh fill his pipe, and light it and smoke it out, and then fill and light it again, and presently he proposed to Joe that they should go out and try to kill a deer. Joe was ready and they started. For a short distance, they followed the trail up the river, and then turning to the left, took the first ridge and began to climb the hill on the north side of the valley. It was pretty wet. It had begun to rain again, and the snow was damp, and under the snow there seemed to be an inch or two of water. When they had to pass through willows and other underbrush, these wet the upper parts of their bodies. The ground was soft and slippery, and the down timber and the loose stones made walking and climbing quite hard work. Nevertheless, they pushed on, and having reached the top of the ridge, could see beyond other ridges toward which they climbed.

They crossed one or two elk tracks, made since the snow had stopped falling, but the animals were going pretty fast and they did not follow them. A few deer tracks, made while the snow was falling, tempted them ; but they did not follow them and continued to climb. The higher they went the harder it seemed to rain, and every little while a heavy fog would rise from the valley, and creeping slowly along the mountains would shut out from sight one hilltop after

another, until it reached them and hid everything from their sight. There was a little breeze blowing from the west, and these fogs did not last long; but while they were about them the boys could only stand still and wait for the mist to lift.

As they climbed they saw a good many birds: flickers, robins, and blue snow-birds, as well as some other western birds that Jack did not know.

The boys climbed hill after hill for several hours, but saw nothing but tracks, and none of these seemed worth following. At last Jack turned to Joe and said, "What do you say, Joe, shall we go any further? It's pretty cold, and we can't see far, and perhaps we might as well go down the hill again and get back to camp."

"Well," said Joe, "it's pretty cold and wet up here and we don't see much."

They turned and followed the ridge they were on for some little distance, trying to see down into the valley, and to determine just where the camp was. As they were doing this, all at once the fog lifted, and Jack saw, a little way before them, a green timbered ridge leading down into the valley, pretty near where the camp should be. As he looked down into the valley, Jack heard Joe whisper, "Hold on!" Jack stopped, slowly turned his head and threw a cartridge into his gun, and then stood motionless; for over the crest of the ridge just above them had risen the horns, head and body of an enormous black-tailed buck. Almost at once, two others, much smaller, followed him, and in a moment more two others, one nearly as large as the leader, and the other smaller, came up to the top of

the ridge and looked over. They were a long way off, perhaps three hundred yards, and neither boy dared move for fear of startling them, for two or three jumps would have taken them out of sight. The great leader had seen the boys at once, but could not make out what they were, and perhaps for ten minutes he stood there and watched. He was not alarmed or suspicious, but these two upright objects, which might be stumps or might be something else, excited his curiosity, and he kept looking at them. The deer stood on the very crest of the ridge, with only a white sky for a background; so that the outline of his graceful form and large branching horns was plainly visible.

While he stood there watching, the other deer wandered about, now taking a bite of grass and again giving a long look over the country. One of the smallest came a few steps down the face of the ridge to a low pine, three or four feet in height, against which he began to rub his horns and head, just as a deer or an elk does when ridding the antlers of the velvet, or, as it is termed, "shaking." The large one, next in size to the leader, came still further down the bluff and began to feed at a bush that grew there. A third, the smallest of all, was very playful and frisked about almost as a fawn might do.

At length, after his long, long stare, during which the boys scarcely breathed, the big leader seemed satisfied. He shook himself, and then turned and gave a long look to the east and one to the west; then he lowered his head, took a bite of some weed, and stepping proudly along the ridge for a few yards, turned

away and walked out of sight. While he was doing this, two of the young deer, like boys when the schoolmaster's back is turned and they feel that they can begin to play, backed away from each other, and then charged each other, coming together vigorously, head to head. It did not seem to be done angrily, but rather in sport, and one of them, being evidently much the stronger of the two, as he was the larger, pushed the other a few feet backward, when the smaller one sprang lightly out of the way, and both turned and walked off after the big buck.

Four of the deer had now moved out of sight, and there remained only the large one feeding on the hillside. A couple of dead trees, one leaning against the other, stood sixty or seventy yards in front of the boys, between them and the deer, and it seemed possible by moving up behind these to approach within rifle-shot. He was busily eating, and when he had his head down the boys whispered to each other. Jack said, "Let us sneak up behind those trees, and we can get near enough to kill him, I guess."

"Better wait," said Joe, "pretty soon he'll go off over the hill, and then we can follow him, and get one sure."

But Jack had not yet learned the patience which makes an Indian so certain of his game; he began to make a slow approach, but had taken only a few steps when suddenly the deer stopped feeding, looked about him, walked briskly up to the top of the ridge, and then pausing for a moment to see where his companions were, followed them over the ridge and out of sight.

At last the coast was clear; the boys hurried toward the ridge, and clambered up its steep face with breathless haste. When they reached the crest they cautiously looked over, but saw nothing, and still as they slowly advanced in the direction which the deer seemed to have taken, the game was not seen. They were just about to go back and take the deers' tracks, when suddenly, without an instant's warning, a mountain hurricane of hail, rain and snow swept down upon them, blotting from view every object save those directly at their feet. The wind blew cold, and the rain and hail pelted them. There was no shelter, and all they could do was to turn their backs to the blast and stand there waiting. The storm lasted but a few moments, and as soon as it was over they started back, and soon crossed the tracks of the deer, not far from the ridge. All had been walking slowly, except the last one, who was trotting to catch up with the others. The trail led over the rolling ground, toward two little groups of spruces, and when the boys saw these, and could not see the deer on the open ground beyond, they looked at each other and nodded, each feeling sure that the animals would be found in this timber.

They were still a hundred yards from the nearest clump of trees when Joe's eye caught sight of something moving just beyond them, and almost at the same time Jack saw something dark move against the snow. They made themselves very small, and keeping the thick foliage of the trees between themselves and the deer, crept carefully up almost to the timber. Suddenly, through a little opening in the branches, Jack

saw three deer standing close together — the big leader and two of the yearlings. He wanted the leader, of course, and yet he could see only his head and neck, and hesitated to shoot at the neck, for he was chilled and shaking with the cold. However, he determined to risk it, and looking round at Joe saw that he was ready, and that he nodded. Jack fired, the leader disappeared, and a moment later four deer ran out over the snow, beyond the trees, and stopped; and as they turned to look back, Joe fired, and killed the other big deer.

"Hurrah!" said Jack, and he shook Joe's hand, "we've surely got plenty of meat now."

"Yes," said Joe, "good meat, too."

They found the big leader lying on the snow just beyond the trees, his neck broken, and the other big deer not more than fifty yards beyond him.

"Now, Jack," said Joe, "I tell you what we'd better do: you go back to camp and get two pack horses, and fetch 'em up here, and I'll butcher these deer, and then we can take 'em back to the camp to-night. We don't want to make two trips."

"That's so," said Jack, "I'll either go back for the horses or butcher, whichever you like."

"No," said Joe, "you go back, and when I get through butchering I'll make a little fire here and dry off, and wait for you."

"All right," said Jack, "I'll do it. I don't believe it'll take me very long to get back to camp, and I'll be back here in an hour or two, anyhow."

He at once started, and was soon following the green timbered ridge down to the stream. When he

reached there he found that camp was only a short distance further down the creek, and he was soon standing by the fire. Hugh had heard the shots, and was not surprised when Jack told them that they had two deer. Jack went out to look up the horses, and soon returned with two of them, and putting saddles on them, mounted one, and rode off up the hill leading the other.

CHAPTER XI

TRACKS IN THE SNOW

MEANTIME Joe had proceeded with his butchering and after he had finished, gathered some wood and made himself a little fire. It took some time to do this, for almost everywhere the wood was wet; but by looking carefully he found some dry branches that were sheltered by the foliage above them, and others that lay under a fallen tree, and presently he had a good fire lighted, and one that was so strong that he could throw wet wood on it and it would soon dry and burn. He built his fire in a sheltered place, and the light breeze drifted the smoke off down the stream. Before long he was warm and dry. After he had waited a while, he went out beyond the trees and looked off toward the ridge where Jack had gone, to see whether he was not yet coming back, but he saw nothing. A little later he went out again and Jack was not yet in sight, but as he turned about he saw coming down the hill about half a mile off, thirteen elk, mostly cows and calves, but one spikehorn, and following last of all and keeping the others together a monstrous bull with a great pair of horns. Of course when he saw them Joe stood still. The elk had come down from some higher hill, and when they came to where the snow was not very deep they

began to scatter out and feed. When most of them had passed behind the point of hill which backed the next ridge above the one Joe was on, he began to move very slowly and cautiously toward the shelter of a clump of trees. Every now and then, one of the old cows would lift her head, and as she munched the grass that she had just plucked, would look all around the horizon, and when she did so, Joe stood without moving a muscle. Then when all the heads were down again, he very slowly moved a little toward his cover. At last only one of the elk was in sight, and when she put her head down he could see nothing but her back and hips, and two or three steps took him out of sight even of these. Still he did not run, but walked slowly, watching closely the sky-line above him, for at any moment one of the elk might walk up there to look over the country. None appeared, however, and in a very few moments he was hidden by the trees.

Now he did not know what to do. His first idea was to creep up to the ridge and kill some of the elk, but before he determined that he would do this he considered. He remembered how Hugh often spoke of not killing anything more than they needed to eat, and he knew that these deer that they had would last them for a long time. He did not wish to do anything that Hugh would not like, and so, instead of deciding that he would kill anything, he took his gun and walked over to the ridge, to look at the elk. He had crept up to the top of the hill and peered over, and was watching the elk feeding not far in front of him — half a dozen of them within easy rifle-range —

when he heard a faint whoop behind him, and turning his head saw Jack coming with the pack-horses. Slowly creeping back a little way, Joe waved to him to come on, and to hurry, and Jack galloped the pack horses over to the foot of the ridge, and at a sign from Joe, dismounted. Then he crept up to Joe and they both lay there on the hill and watched the elk.

It was a pretty sight, and an interesting one, too. The bull, although all the time feeding, seemed to keep close watch of his companions. Once in a while one of the cows would stray off to a little distance from the others, and the bull would walk over toward her, shaking his head as he approached, and when the cow saw this she turned back to the bunch and joined them again. Then the bull began to feed once more.

"Watch him," said Joe, "he's a pretty good herder, isn't he? He won't let one of those cows wander away; he's afraid that somewhere there might be some other old bull looking for cows, that would take her and carry her off. Pretty smart at this time of year they are."

While they were watching the herd as they fed along a little beyond them, presently some eddy of the wind brought their scent to the cows farthest down the stream, and they lifted up their heads, and looked for a moment; then turned and trotted swiftly away up the hill. As soon as they did this, the other cows began to look, and then to move off; but the bull seemed to understand at once that there was danger near at hand, and rushed around the cows, thrusting at them with his horns, so that in a moment

they were all in motion, and swiftly trotting away. At the top of the hill the cows paused to look back; but the bull, which was laboring along behind, shook his head at them, and they began to run again. When the elk had disappeared, the boys rose to their feet, and then realized that they were both of them chattering with cold. The breeze was blowing harder now, and lying on the hillside exposed to it, they had both become chilled. They went down to the horses and took them over to where the deer lay and then built up the fire and got warm again. Then they packed the deer on the two horses, but the animals were so large that they could not lift them without cutting them up into quarters. At last the loads were arranged, the ropes tightened, and they started down the hill toward camp, which they reached just before dark.

Supper was ready, and as soon as the boys had hung up their meat on the branches of a tree, and had washed their hands in the brook, they fell to eagerly. Not much was said during the meal, but after it had been cleared away and Hugh had filled his pipe and was sitting by the fire comfortably smoking, Jack said to him, "Hugh, we had a mighty nice view of a bunch of elk this afternoon, and watched them for quite a while, and saw the old bull gather up the cows and drive them away when they found that we were there."

"Yes," said Hugh, "haven't you ever seen a bull do that before?"

"No," said Jack, "I've seen plenty of elk but I never happened to see that."

"Well," said Hugh, "you know the bull elk is mighty rough with his cows, after he has gathered them and got a bunch, and what is more, when he is looking for them in the early fall, just about this time, he is mighty systematic in the way he hunts for them. I've sat on a hill and seen an old bull hunt out a lot of ravines in the elk country just as systematically as a cow-puncher would hunt them out for cattle. He makes a regular business of it, and after he's got them together he don't allow any straggling, and if a cow don't mind what he says, and he can catch her, he gives her a terrible thumping with those old horns of his."

"Well, Hugh, did you ever see two bulls fight?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "I've seen 'em do that a good many times. I reckon I've told you about that before. They don't fight quickly; they 're not active like an antelope when they're fighting: but they're mighty powerful, and they come together pretty hard, and then they just push and push, and at last, if the footing is good, the biggest one is pretty sure to push the other out of the way, and if the smaller one doesn't hop round pretty lively, he gets a good punch with the horns. I've heard tell of elk killing each other when they fought; but I never saw anything like that, and I never even saw an elk get cut up with the horns of an animal that he was fighting with. Of course I never had a chance to look close at many elk that I saw fighting, but I never could see any blood or any cuts. An elk-hide is pretty thick, and I guess they just scratch and bruise each other.

"I've heard of elk-horns being locked, same as

deer-horns often are, but I never myself saw but one pair; they were locked and you could not pull them apart. I heard that some chap bought them, up on the Missouri River, to send back east to some museum."

"Well, I tell you, Hugh," said Jack, "I don't think much of elk, anyhow, except to eat. You remember that tame one we had down at the ranch? There wasn't anything interesting or nice about him; he was awkward and clumsy and mean. Of course he looked nice, but that was about all."

"No," said Hugh, "that's so; elk meat is good, but that's about all elk are good for — to eat."

The next morning the sun came out bright and strong, and the snow began to melt rapidly. Lines were strung among the trees, and all the blankets, ropes and saddles, which had been more or less wet during the last day or two, were hung up to dry. The flesh of the deer was sliced into thin flakes, and hung up on scaffolds made by Joe and Hugh, and under this a small fire was made, and the smoke passing under the flakes of meat partially dried it. The hams and saddle of one of the deer were kept for fresh meat.

"I'd like to get off this afternoon," said Hugh, toward midday. "Of course it's early in the season yet, and no heavy snow is likely to fall; but often we have a storm late in September that might stop us for a week, and I'd be pleased if we could get over the ridge before that comes. We must start as soon as these things get dry, and as soon as that meat will do to pack; it's pretty fat, and it won't dry fast in this kind of weather; this air is too damp."

In the effort to hurry up the drying process they built a large fire near the wet things that were hung up, and as the heat from the fire and from the sun grew strong, the steam rose from them. A little after noon, Hugh, who had been inspecting the things, said, "Come on, now; let's saddle up. The robes and blankets are dry, and we'll shove this meat in a sack and give it another steaming when we get to a good place. The weather is cool enough now so that it will keep until we get over the range." Before long the packs were lashed, and all the members of the party were in the saddle and pushing their way up the stream.

There was now no visible trail. The snow covered everything, and though it was dripping fast from the trees at their level, they could see that on the higher hills it still hung thick upon the branches. From time to time the stream narrowed, so that they were obliged to leave it and climb the ridges, which often afforded much better going than the creek bottom. As they climbed higher and higher, everything was draped in white; but now the sun went behind the clouds, and the glare of the white snow was not uncomfortable. Hugh had said as they started, "You boys better take and blacken your faces; I am going to do it;" and taking some charcoal from the fire, each of the party rubbed the black over the upper parts of the face, the cheeks, the bridge of the nose, and around the eyes, to keep the glare from the snow from affecting the eyes.

They climbed higher and higher, and as they climbed, the stream grew smaller. From time to time

they reached some point from which there was an extended view, showing far-reaching, snow-clad mountains and ever-green forests; and ahead of them the high peaks of the main divide, with precipices of bare black rock, to which the snow could not cling. As they passed along, Jack noticed frequent tracks of deer and elk, and others of smaller animals which he did not recognize, and which there was no time to stop and ask about. Hugh rode fast, and the boys kept the animals close behind him. Often for a little distance through an open valley, or along a bare ridge, Hugh would trot or gallop. He was evidently anxious to get on.

It was growing dark when, at the head of a pretty, open valley, Hugh turned his horse into the timber, and after looking around for a moment, said, "We'll camp here, boys. Bring the horses right up close to Baldy." They did so, and soon had the loads on the ground. Poles were quickly cut, the lodge was put up, and the ground within it was soon cleared of snow, and a fire started. Then, under Hugh's direction, the boys went out and broke several armfuls of spruce boughs, which they brought in and placed around the walls of the lodge where the beds would be spread, to keep them off the snow. Two of the horses had already been picketed and the others hobbled. There was danger that night they might desert, and take the back trail for the lower ground, where, of course, they well remembered that there was good grass, while up here to get anything to eat they would have to paw through the deep snow.

"You boys had better cook supper," said Hugh.

"I'm going down to the end of this valley, to see if I can't stop it up in some way so that the horses can't get away to-night; they're likely to leave us, and if they do, we'll have to hunt them to-morrow."

Before entering this valley they had passed up through a narrow cañon, riding for a short distance in the stream-bed, and Hugh, who had noticed two or three spruce trees standing on either side of the stream, took an axe, went down there, and felling two of the trees across the stream, made a fence that the horses could not surmount. They could possibly get around by climbing high on the hillside, but as all the loose ones were hobbled, it was not likely that they would go very far up hill.

When he returned to the camp supper was ready, and before long they were all fast asleep.

The next morning was bright and cold. No more snow had fallen. The horses were all there, but those that had been hobbled looked gaunt and hungry. Hugh was up before daylight and took off their hobbles, and when the sun rose they were all busily at work getting what must have been their supper and breakfast. When their front feet were tied together, they could not paw through the snow to the grass beneath.

"Now boys," said Hugh, as soon as breakfast was over, "let's saddle up and get along. I'd like mightily to get over the range to-day, if we can." It took but a short time to get started, for the three had now been working together so long that they wasted no time, and made no unnecessary motions.

Neither of the boys had noticed the night before

how deep the snow was; but to-day they could see that down here under the trees it was eight or ten inches deep, though perhaps in the open where it had a chance to melt or to blow off there was not so much.

As they went forward, Jack was more and more interested in the tracks. Down at the foot of a cañon wall in the valley he saw a series of tiny parallel dots in the snow, which he thought must have been made by a little striped squirrel, which had run out from the broken rock-fragments where he had his home, down nearly to the water's edge, and then, frightened by some sight or sound, had turned and hurried, with long bounds, back to his rocky home. Higher up on the hill, about every weed-stalk that showed above the surface of the snow were numbers of long parallel depressions, and scattered about on the snow were fragments of the seed-cases of the plants, and strips of the bark of the stem. Here the birds had been at work, and so hard pressed for food that they had visited almost every projecting plant.

There had been killing during the night; death had been abroad, travelling over the barren hills, and pushing his way among the thickly clustered pines. There had been battles and ambuscades, and stern unrelenting pursuits; fierce struggles; resistance, feeble and unavailing; despair, and, at last, yielding, when the hope of escape was lost. More than one life had gone out that night on the hillside. Here, close to the margin of a little brook, was a pile of bright blue feathers, telling its story of death, and near it in the light snow, long, light strokes, which told of some fierce bird, that, in the gray light of the morning, had

crushed in his strong crooked talons a little blue-bird which was just beginning his journey toward the south. There were tracks of a fox winding about on the hill-side, often quartering the ground like a well trained hunting dog. He had covered much ground, and had visited every spot that might give shelter to his prey. In one place Jack saw the tracks of a grouse, and those of a fox following them, then suddenly the tracks of the grouse were seen no more, the last two sunk deep in the snow, showing where the bird had sprung from the ground and had darted away among the snow-laden trees. A few feet from these, Jack could see where the fox had stopped when the bird took flight, and he could fancy how angrily the sly fellow gazed after it as he saw his wished-for breakfast disappear. A little further on the fox had been more lucky, and a hole dug in the snow and a tuft or two of bluish fur showed where the keen-nosed hunter had caught a mouse.

At the border of a grove of pines, Jack saw the impress of the great pads of the snowshoe rabbit, scarcely sinking into the light snow. For the most part, the rabbits kept close under the evergreens where the snow was less deep, and food most easily to be found; but if startled by fox or wolf, they could readily run over the drifts, where the heavier pursuer must sink into them, far behind.

As they climbed higher and higher, the trees grew larger, and now they began to see, through the valley and coming down from the higher hills on either side, the tracks of elk. The heavy snow-fall, warning these animals of the near approach of winter, had set them

in motion down from the peaks, and everywhere trails were seen leading from the hillside into the valley. They saw none of the animals, for the footfalls of the pack-train clambering over the rocks, the sound of dead branches rattling against the packs, and the calls to the horses alarmed the elk at a distance, and they retreated to the timber, out of sight.

Presently the climbing seemed at an end for the present, and the valley became more open and nearly level. Not far ahead off to the southeast they could see a low pass in the mountains, which seemed likely to be the one they were trying to find. As they ascended, the stream continued to grow smaller, large branches, almost equal in size to the main brook kept coming into it, and often it was uncertain which was the main fork. Hugh gave no hint of what was passing in his mind, but pushed on, and the boys kept the animals close behind him.

In this broad level valley there were more elk tracks than ever. These, seen at a distance, were very pretty, often looking like two delicate chains laid side by side, and running for a long distance almost in a straight line. Sometimes the animals seemed to have wandered about, biting off the heads of the grass and weeds that stood above the snow; but always at last the tracks turned and kept on down the valley. In the middle of the great meadow stood an old pine stub, and a number of the tracks converged to this, and then went away from it in one path. It seemed that the elk, coming along, had gone to this stump, and rubbed against it, and then all followed the same trail going away.

As the afternoon advanced, the valley grew narrow again and they entered the timber, and soon afterward came on what was evidently a trail that had been travelled both by whites and Indians. Some of the trees were blazed with an axe, but many years ago, for the bark had partly grown over the old blazes; there were later marks where little three-cornered patches of the bark had been knocked off, showing where the hard corners of packs had struck against the trees. On one or two of the trees were seen little woolen threads, white and red, showing where some Indian's blanket had rubbed against the trunk and left a little sign, to remain there for years. At length, the trail again passed out of the timber into a narrow valley, and a sharp climb brought them to a place where water seemed to be flowing down hill both before and behind them. Hugh stopped and waved his hand and pointed ahead; and beyond they could see a valley, steep-walled and full of timber, stretching off toward the southeast.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE ELK?

"HERE we are, boys; this is the divide — the top of the range," said Hugh. "Now if we can only get down this hill and find decent travelling in the valley, we'll soon be out of this snow. I expect this is one of the heads of Wind River, and I hope we can make it down below the snow to-morrow."

The way down the new stream was steep, and for a while progress was slow. There appeared to be no trail, and several times Hugh dismounted and went ahead slowly on foot, to pick out a way for the animals down steep rock slides. At last, however, they came to a point where the stream had a little bottom, thickly overgrown with timber, but all of it green; and working their way along through this they came, shortly before sundown, to a little open park surrounded by willows, where they camped.

There was a little daylight left after camp had been made and supper eaten, and Jack, with Hugh, walked out to the edge of the stream. There was a good deal of water flowing in it, for ever since they came into the valley they had been crossing rivulets and brooklets, tumbling down from the high hills and pouring their current into the valley. The little river flowed among the close-set pines, and its bed was

composed of great blocks of stone. Just opposite the camp it opened out into a pool twenty feet long, and half as wide; and, as they stood here, they saw two little dippers at work in the stream.

Although Jack had often seen these birds in the northern mountains, they constantly interested him. He knew that, although living always in and about the water, their nearest relations were not water-birds, such as ducks or snipe, but instead were thrushes, of which the common robin is one. Yet as many times as he had seen them diving into the water, swimming about on it, and again disappearing beneath its waves, he could never quite get over his astonishment at seeing a bird walk down the shelving rock or smooth beach into the water, and keep on walking, without attempting to swim or to dive, until it had disappeared.

He spoke about this now to Hugh, and said, "Those are the queerest little birds I ever saw, and I don't know of any like them anywhere."

"Yes," said Hugh, "they are queer; but they're mighty cheerful — mighty good company if you're alone in the mountains. They stay here, you know, all summer and all winter, wherever the water is open, and they've got a real nice little song, and they sing, too, at all seasons of the year. There, listen to that one," he said, as a dipper appeared from under the water in the pool before them, and then flying to an old dead stick that projected from the bank, alighted on it and began to warble a simple but pleasing song. After it had finished, it flew part way across the pool, and then dived from the wing, and came to the surface again some distance below where it had entered

the water. Then flying to a rock it seemed to batter to pieces some small object which it had brought up from the bottom, which it then devoured.

"Don't it seem queer, Hugh," said Jack, "that they never get wet; their plumage seems light and fluffy, like that of a land bird, and not close and compact like that of the duck or grebe. They must have a big oil-sack, and must oil up their feathers pretty often."

"I reckon they do," said Hugh, "but I'm sure they never get wet. I've often wondered what it is they feed on; I suppose it's insects that live at the bottom of the water. Anyhow, I've often seen them bring up one of those little worms that build sort of houses for themselves out of sticks and little bits of sand, and take it to a rock and pound it to pieces, and then eat the worm that's inside of it. You've seen those things, haven't you? I don't know what they do, or what they're good for, without it is to feed the birds and the fish."

"Oh yes, Hugh," said Jack, "I've often seen those. Mighty queer little houses they are, but I don't know any more than you do what the insect in them lives for. I expect he may turn into a dragonfly, or maybe some kind of beetle or other. I know I've heard that there are lots of insects that lay their eggs, and live part of their lives in water, and then finally, coming up to the surface, change their shape and become perfect insects."

"Well," said Hugh, "I expect likely that's the way it may be."

Jack noticed that the dippers seemed to dive into the upper part of the pool, and to be carried down by

the swift current close to a little point of rocks, and slowly walking out there, and standing perfectly still, he soon saw one of the birds drop down from a large stone near him, and disappear under the water. He could see a sort of a flying shadow under the surface, and in a moment the bird came up a little below him, and flew off to the other side of the stream. As it grew darker, the dippers disappeared, having probably gone to their roost; and as the two returned to camp, Hugh said to Jack, "Son, did you ever see one of the nests made by these birds?"

"No, Hugh, I never did," said Jack.

"Well, we must be on the lookout for that. They're mighty queer little nests. On the outside they seem to be made of green moss, so that the nests look just like a bunch of moss growing on a rock. Often they build them close under some little waterfall, and I expect maybe it's the mist from the fall that keeps the moss wet and growing; but if the outside is damp and wet, the inside is just as dry as can be, and the young birds have a good warm place, and a good roof over their heads. It's kind of fun to watch one of these nests and see how hard the old birds have to work to keep the young birds quiet. They come with an insect, and give it to some one of the young ones, and then dart off, and are not gone more than a few minutes, and then come back again, so both the old birds keep travelling back and forth; and all the time the young ones are making all the noise they can, only you can't hear 'em for the sound of the water—they're a hungry lot, I tell you. Of course, the breeding season is past a long time now,

and maybe if we keep our eyes open we'll be able to see a nest and get it for you to take home with you, though often they're in a place where it's mighty hard to get at them."

The little circular meadow in which they had camped was not large enough to give good feeding for their horses, even if the ground had not been covered with snow; but Hugh felt certain that the horses would not try to follow the back trail up the hill again, nor did he think that they would venture away down the stream into country unknown to them. However, he picketed two horses and hobbled most of the others, and when morning came they were most of them in sight, though one or two had strayed away into the timber. The snow on the ground made it an easy matter to follow them, and soon after sunrise the train had started on again.

The travelling was better than had been expected. Although sometimes the walls of the valley drew so close together that there was hardly room for the stream to flow, they managed to get along without very much climbing, and were all the time going down hill. The next night when they camped, the snow had almost entirely disappeared from the valley, only patches lying in some of the most shady spots. There was abundant sign of game here, but they saw none, nor did they look for it. The next afternoon however, Hugh stopped as they were crossing a meadow, and, calling Jack to him, pointed out some tracks in the soft ground, which Jack at first supposed were elk tracks, but on more careful examination found to be quite different; and after thinking for a

moment, he asked Hugh if they could be moose tracks.

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's just what they are. This was a good bull, and he crossed here early this morning. Follow his tracks a little way and see if you can make out anything special about them, and then come on after us and tell me what you saw."

Jack followed slowly along on the tracks until they entered the timber. Then he returned to take his position in the pack train. By this time the way was so open that it was not necessary to travel in single file, and Jack, riding up to Hugh said, "Well, Hugh, those tracks are about twice as long as an elk's track, and only a little bit wider; that makes them look long and narrow. Then, besides that, I noticed that whenever the animal went over a soft spot, and his foot sank in a little, there seemed to be two marks behind the main track, and I suppose those are the dew claws sinking in. Is that so?"

"That's it," said Hugh, "I'm glad you took notice so carefully. Maybe we'll get a chance to kill a moose before we get down out of these mountains. We don't really want one now; but you've never seen a moose, and I expect if one should show up, why maybe you'd want to shoot at it."

"Well, Hugh, I guess I would," said Jack; "but I suppose as long as we're travelling here with the pack train, and making so much noise, there isn't much chance of our seeing one."

"No, not much," said Hugh.

As the valley became wider, and the stream larger, there seemed to be more life in the bottom. Several

broods of ruffed grouse had been noticed during the day, and all were so tame that they scarcely moved out of the horses' way as they passed along. In the river there were a few ducks, of the kind that breed high up in the mountains; and the next morning, when Jack was down at the water's edge, just after he had risen, he saw a hawk make a dash at a family of ducks. The ducks were flying down the river when the hawk came out of the timber and darted toward them. They all fell into the water, with loud splashings, and the hawk swooped at one of them which was a little apart from the main flock; but the duck made a rush to one side and easily avoided it. Then the hawk gave up the chase, and flew into a tall tree, where he watched the ducks as they swam swiftly down the stream. Jack was amused at a little spotted sandpiper that had been flying up the stream when the hawk darted for the ducks. The bird was very much frightened, thinking that the hawk was after it. It dropped into the water as if it had been shot, and sat there with its head cocked to one side, watching the enemy, and prepared to dive at a second's warning, if the hawk should dash at it.

The weather was bright and pleasant, and they kept on down the stream, which constantly grew wider. Now there was some sage-brush on the benches above the bottom, and often the trail kept away from the stream, and close under these benches, in order to avoid the frequent wet and miry places which would have troubled the horses. As Jack was riding along he suddenly heard a shot behind him, and looking about, saw three deer running near the

top of a ridge, and just below the timber. Joe had shot at one of them, and just after Jack looked round, two of them disappeared over the ridge. The last one stopped almost at its crest, and looked back, and Joe fired again. The doe fell, and Joe rode up to where she lay. The train was halted, and when the deer had been brought down to the trail she was put on one of the packs and they started on again. As the bottom became wider it was evident that beaver had been much at work here, and although they had long deserted it, the marshes and sloughs and mud-holes caused by their damming of the stream still remained as pitfalls for the traveller.

Ever since they had left Snake River they had heard from time to time the shrill bugling call of the elk, though near the top of the range where the snow was deepest they had not heard them whistle. Now, however, they frequently heard elk, and on this day an old bull came out of a point of timber near which they were travelling, and stood and looked at them. He was but a short distance off, and might easily have been killed; but they had meat enough, and there was no reason for shooting him. He was but forty or fifty yards distant, and seemed disposed to come even nearer, making some threatening demonstrations with his head, and advancing a few steps; but no attention was paid to him, and presently he turned about and disappeared in the timber. Hugh said that very likely the elk took some of the pack animals for cows, and wished to gather them in.

That night they camped on an enlargement of the river, which almost seemed like a little lake. Behind

them and on either side were timbered hills, before them the water, and beyond the mountains rising steeply. The lodge stood in a little grove of pine trees, which furnished shelter and fuel, and the hungry animals fed on the rich grass behind it. The bright fire in front of the lodge lit up the trees and the lodge and the pack saddles, and as it flamed and flickered, curious shadows peeped out from the dark caverns that stretched back beneath the pine branches to the gloom beyond, and sometimes creeping stealthily forth, danced for a moment within the circle of the firelight, and then chased one another back into the darkness, and were swallowed up in it. The soft murmur of the river over its stones came to the campers in a monotonous undertone, while now and then from the nearby trees came the plaintive call of some bird, and the mountain sides echoed at intervals to the fierce shrill challenge of the angry elk.

"This is a great elk country, isn't it, Hugh?" said Jack. "It seems to me that elk are 'most everywhere, and I suppose they'll always be here, won't they?"

"Well, I don't know, son," said Hugh; "it's pretty hard to say about that. They'll likely be here until the white folks come; but as soon as they come, why the elk are bound to go. I've heard they're talking about passing a law not to let them be killed in the Park we came through — that place where the hot springs and spouting fountains are. But just as soon as mineral is discovered in these hills, the game will go. I reckon, too, that this law they're talking about passing for that Park back there won't amount to much, for I talked with two hunters there who said

that they expected to get the contract this winter to kill meat for all them fellows that's working on those buildings that we saw. Of course what two men'll kill in a winter won't amount to much; but just as soon as many people begin to come into this country, the game will all get killed off. I've seen places down in the south, in Colorado, where twenty or twenty-five years ago game was so plenty that you could kill all you wanted right close to camp, any time; and now that country is full of settlers, miners and ranchmen, and they've killed off the game for the mining camps and tie camps and every settler has to go and get three or four wagon loads for his winter's meat, and the first thing they know there won't be a hoof left in the country."

"Well, but Hugh," said Jack, "what's going to become of all the game? Isn't there going to be any left after a few years?"

"You can't prove it by me, son. I don't know; but I expect there won't be any game left, unless they pass some laws, and enforce them, to stop the killing of it. Of course laws don't mean anything without they're enforced, and as far as I can see, these laws protecting the game never are enforced."

"But, Hugh," said Jack, "that seems to me all wrong. Do you mean to say that if I come out here twenty years from now there won't be anything for me to hunt?"

"Looks that way to me, son," said Hugh.

"And if I should have a son, and ever want to bring him out here and show him the things that I saw when I was a boy, he could not see them?"

"I don't believe he could. I tell you, son, this country has changed an awful lot since I first saw it, and it seems to me it's changing more and more all the time, and quicker now than it used to. I used to think that the time would never come when I couldn't go out and kill meat if I wanted it; but my ideas have changed a whole lot in the last year or two, and I believe now that the time will come when there won't be any game left for a man to shoot with a rifle. I used to think that the buffalo could never be killed off, but I've seen 'em killed off over part of the country, and I may live long enough to see 'em killed off everywhere."

"Well," said Jack, "it seems as if there ought to be some way to stop that."

"Yes, there ought to be," said Hugh, "but you see, every fellow that comes out into the mountains, he's just like you and me; we think the other fellow oughtn't to kill game, but we ought to kill it. We claim that we don't kill anything more than what we want to eat, and these other fellows claim, maybe — if they're buffalo skinners or elk skinners — that they don't kill any more than they want to skin. Each man thinks that what he'll kill won't do any harm; but when they're all at work killing as hard as they can, the upshot of it is that there's no game left."

"I see," said Jack; "each one of us is thinking about himself and about nobody else, and yet each one of us is likely to talk about what the other people do. You must have seen lots of game in your life, Hugh," he added.

"Yes, son," said Hugh, "I've seen a heap of game.

Why, at one time men used to travel day after day, and never be out of sight of game; and most times the game was not afraid at all. Buffalo or elk or antelope would just move out the way, and a man never thought of shooting at anything until he needed meat to eat. Of course in those times we never took anything but the best parts, and so it often happened that we killed an animal every two or three days. But we never thought, up to within a very few years ago, when railroads began to come into the country, that things would be much different from what they were then; but when the railroads came, they brought a heap of people, a good many of them hunters, and a good many of them men who came to live on the land where the game had always roamed without being bothered by anybody, except maybe once a year when Indians happened to pass that way and perhaps camped in the neighborhood for a few weeks. Of course the time has been when a man could easily enough kill a car-load of game in a day, but in the old times no one had any reason for doing that. We could only eat about so much meat, and wear about so much buckskin; and ammunition cost money, and nobody wanted to waste it."

CHAPTER XIII

A PACK HORSE IN DANGER

THEY had not gone far down the river the next morning when the mountains on either side drew closer together, and the valley narrowed greatly. Before they had gone far Hugh stopped, and, turning, said to the boys as they came up, "I don't like the looks of thing ahead; I reckon we'll have to go up on the hillside down below here. Looks to me like we were coming to a cañon."

A little farther along it proved so; and Hugh, after going ahead and making a little investigation, called out to the boys to bring on the animals. They found him on a narrow game trail, which began to climb the hill among thick timber, where the trees stood so close on both sides of the trail that it was evident that there might be trouble in getting the packs along. Hugh got an axe out of the pack, and, going ahead on foot, began to chop the branches on either side, so as to make room for the loaded horses. Two or three times he found small trees fallen across the trail, and, as it was extremely steep, it was necessary to cut out each one of these. Progress was slow, but after two or three hours they emerged from the timber and could see ahead of them the trail leading along a very steep hillside. Immediately below the

trail grew underbrush, and below that the rocks fell off sharply to the river. From the hillside a number of little brooks and springs trickled down, making slippery, muddy places in the trail over which it was necessary to go carefully. Hugh several times called back to the boys, saying, "Go slow along this place, and don't crowd the animals; let each one take its time, and you boys go on foot. The horses will follow all right."

There was nothing on the trail that was difficult for a man on foot or for a careful horse, and for some time they went on very well, and made good time; but in crossing a little brook which ran down over the trail, and where there was a mud-hole, the bay horse, pausing and putting down his head to investigate the trail, was crowded upon by the dun and kicked back at him with both heels, and when his feet came down they were over the edge of the trail, and, trying to recover himself, he clumsily fell down and rolled over once or twice. Just below the trail at this point there was a big patch of stiff alders growing close to the steep hillside. Jack saw the horse begin to fall, and, dropping his own bridle rein and placing his gun on the hillside above the trail, he slipped by the dun, and before the pack horse had turned over twice he had caught it by its hackamore and checked it. In a moment Joe was by his side, and the two hung on like grim death, and held the horse there on its side, with its head a little up the hill. Meantime Hugh had left his horse and come back along the trail, and in a moment he too had hold of the horse's head. Fortunately, the horse lay perfectly quiet,

and neither slid nor rolled, his hips being more or less supported by the alders. Hugh quickly unfastened the hackamore, which gave all hands a better hold, and then said to Jack, "Slip down there now, behind the horse, and see if you can loosen that lash rope. If you can't, cut the lacing that holds it to the cinch. We've got to get that pack off, or else lose the animal. Don't get where the horse can hit you with his feet; reach over his back."

The horse was lying on its off side, and it was impossible to loosen the lash rope, but reaching over the back, Jack cut the lacings of the lash cinch, so that the whole lash rope fell off. "Now," said Hugh, "come back here and hang on to the hackamore." Jack took Hugh's place, and Hugh quickly loosened the sling ropes, and removing the packs from the saddle, carried them up to the trail, and then along it a little distance until he reached a place where the ground on the upper side sloped more gradually. Here he deposited the packs one by one; then he took hold of the hackamore again and said to Jack, "Go and get your rope and bring it here, and tie it round this horse's neck in a bowline." When this had been done, the end of the rope was passed round a small spruce tree, which grew just above the trail, and then all three held the rope, so that now the horse could not possibly roll down the hill, unless the tree gave way, or the men let the rope go. While two of them held the rope, Jack led the horses along the trail, until a place was reached where it came out on a wider ledge, and leaving them there returned. Then the pack horse was made to rise to

its feet, and without very great difficulty, assisted by the rope about its neck, it climbed back to the trail and was led along to a place where there was more room. Now, while Hugh mended the lash cinch, the boys carried the packs along the trail to where it was wider, and at length the horse was re-packed, and they started on.

While they were at work, Jack said to Hugh, "I want you to understand, Hugh, that I didn't drive the dun onto that horse. The dun came up behind him and stopped, and the bay kicked at him, and lost his footing, and went over the side of the trail."

"I know," said Hugh, "I know; I was watching. It wasn't anybody's fault, but the fool horse that tried to kill himself. You did mighty well to get hold of him as quick as you did, and if it hadn't been for that, if he'd made one more roll, he'd have gone over the rocks, and we'd have lost him, and likely a lot of the load he's carrying.

"We've got to look for things like this when we're travelling with a pack train, and I'm mighty surprised that we've had as little trouble as we have."

It was near sundown when Hugh stopped as they came out on a bench of the hillside, and said: "I reckon we'll have to camp up here to-night, boys. There don't seem to be any place where we can get down to the river. There's good grass here for the horses and a place where we can picket two or three of them; but I don't see any water just here. Jack, you ride up the hill, and see whether you can find anything that looks like a spring. Joe and I'll stop here with the horses."

Jack had not ridden far, when, passing over a little ridge, he found, issuing from a ledge of rock, a good spring, which ran down into a little ravine, and calling to the others, they came up there, unsaddled, and made camp. It was dark when supper was over, and their talk was chiefly of the difficulties of the day, and the narrow escape had by the pack horse.

"A man is bound to lose an animal in the mountains now and then," said Hugh, "not always through his own carelessness, but because there's always some horses and mules that are fools. After all a horse is nothing but a bundle of nerves, and if he gets scared and loses his head, why he doesn't do anything but jump round and kick and make things worse for himself. Now, that's where a good man has the bulge on any dumb beast that ever was. A man, if he's got sense, will stop and think, and reason, and try to find some way out of his difficulty; but a critter doesn't do that. That's the reason horses and mules and cattle stampede, and that's the reason often that human beings stampede too; they lose their senses, and become no better at all than just so many animals. We've always got to keep our wits about us, be ready, and when anything happens do the right thing, and do it right off — like you did to-day, son, when you ran to grab that horse's head, and like you did too, Joe; for I saw that you were both ready. You saved us the horse, and a mighty good job it is.

"I remember one day, years ago, we lost our whole kitchen outfit just through the foolishness of a mule. It was near Henry's Fork of Green River, and I

was guiding a lot of soldiers and bug hunters up from the Unita agency. To get down into the valley we had to follow down a mighty sharp crest that ran out between two deep ravines. It was mighty narrow, and a terrible long way down on either side, but there were no bad places in it; but a big bay mule that carried the kitchen, in two big baskets, tried to turn round and look at the rest of the train that were coming, and somehow she caught her hind legs over the edge, and they slipped down, and she hung a little while with her forefeet, but before any one could get to her she let go, and she fell. She was dead long before she struck the bottom, I guess, and the kitchen was all smashed and broken up. I believe we did get some knives and forks and tin plates out of the mess, but the plates were all battered, and had to be hammered out on a tree with an axe before they would set on the ground. It was one of the worst falls I ever saw an animal take."

The next morning the horses were seen scattered all along the hillside above the camp, and it took the boys some time to gather and bring them in; and while they were doing this, a big doe, followed by two little fawns, jumped up out of a patch of quaking aspen, ran a short distance up above them on the hillside, and then all three animals turning round stood looking at them, with their great ears thrown forward. The boys stood for a few moments and looked at her, and then she turned again and clambered still higher up, only to stop again for another look. Neither felt any desire to shoot at her.

The greater part of the day was devoted to working

down stream along the hillside. They found that they could travel with some comfort on the benches, except when these were interrupted at frequent intervals by deep ravines, cut out by streams coming down from the hills, and the plunge down into these, and the subsequent climb up the other side, was tiring to the animals. Also they had to stop frequently to adjust the packs and tighten the saddles.

That night they camped again on the benches, and Hugh said, "I believe we'll do as well to stop somewhere, if we can find a good camp, and rest up for two or three days. These horses have been having hard work now for some little time, and they'll get poor. Besides that, this up and down work is awful hard on their backs, and I think it would be a good idea to given 'em a rest. If we can find a good camp to-morrow, any time in the day, as we're travelling along, I think we better stop and rest up, or we can stop right here. You boys might want to take a hunt or a fish. It's nice weather now, and we're low enough down so that there's no danger that the snow will catch us, and I think we can spare the time."

"Well, Hugh," said Jack, "I think that's a pretty good idea. I'd like to look over these hills and see what there is in them, and I guess we'd all like to rest for a day."

The next few days were spent in this camp. Hugh was busy mending up saddles and riggings, fixing blankets, and getting things in good shape for their further journey, while Jack fished a good deal in the river and took many trout.

One day while working around the edge of a large

pool, and trying to cover it all with his line, he found himself close to a steep rocky wall, over which poured a fall six or eight feet high. He had fished here for some minutes, when suddenly his eye caught a round brownish-green bunch of something, resting on a little ledge close to the falls and over deep water; and as he saw it he thought that this must be a nest of the dipper. It was impossible to get close to it, and remembering that it was now autumn and that the nest by no possibility could contain anything, he reached over with his pole, and pushing it from its position, it fell to the water and was soon in his hand. He found it just what Hugh had described: a bunch of moss, containing a chamber within, lined with dried grass and a few feathers, and with a round hole at the front for the passage in and out of the birds. It was a beautiful piece of bird architecture, and he determined to take it with him and to try to carry it back east.

CHAPTER XIV

A BIGHORN

WHILE Hugh had been working and Jack fishing, Joe had been roaming the hillsides. He had found some signs of game and killed another little fawn, but had not been higher up than the first bench above the camp. From there, however, he had seen higher mountains rising beyond, and one night he said to Jack, "Jack, why don't you quit catching these fish, and let's go up high on the hills here, and see if we can't kill something?"

"That's a good idea, Joe," said Hugh, "the meat of these black-tails is about gone now, and it's a good idea for you boys to go out and kill something more. That last fawn that you got is almost gone, too. We don't want to keep eating fish all the rest of the trip."

"Good enough," said Jack. "I'll go you; and we'll start early to-morrow morning. Shall we take horses, Hugh?"

"Why, no," said Hugh, "if I were you I'd leave the horses here to rest, and go afoot. You can hunt better afoot, and then if you kill anything that's too big for you to pack in, you can come down and get a horse for it."

The next morning the two boys started early, and

for a long time scrambled up the hill. When they reached the top of the bench above camp, they found before them a plateau, more or less level, and beyond that rose another ridge, which cut off the view. They climbed and climbed for a long time, passing over one bench after another, and at length, a little before noon, Joe saw far off on the hillside, at about the same level with themselves, three mountain sheep. They were on quite another mountain, for there were two wide gorges between them and the boys; and, what was more to the point, the sheep had already seen them and were looking. So the boys kept on climbing.

At last they reached the rocks, a great brown slope of broken weathered lichen-covered stones, which rose steeply before them; but the going was not bad, and they climbed up, heading always for a place where the precipices above seemed broken away, so that they could get through. It was now noon and the sun shone warm, but a cool breeze was blowing along the hillside, and the air was fresh and invigorating. Jack said, "Now, Joe, when we get to the top of this cliff we'll find a sheltered place, and sit down there and eat."

"That will be good," said Joe; "I'm hungry." They had now climbed quite high, and looking across at the mountain on the other side of the stream, could see that the timber was small, and that a little higher up it seemed to stop. Joe said, "We ought to see sheep up here, it seems to me."

"I should think so," said Jack, "but we'll have to wait until we get to some place where we can get a

good look along the mountain." Before long they reached a ravine, and clambering up it for some distance came out on a rocky hillside, from which both to the north and south they could see a long way over ground that for the most part was open and steeply sloping. Above them the mountains rose in a series of narrow benches — a bench not more than fifty feet wide, and then a cliff as high, then another bench, and another cliff, and so on up. Here, choosing a place which was sheltered from the wind, they sat down and rested for a while, at the same time eating their bread and dried meat, which tasted very good. When they had finished, Jack said:

"Now, Joe, you know more about the mountains than I do. What shall we do? Shall we keep on climbing, and try to get up to the top, or shall we walk along one of these benches? I suppose if we do that we might easily enough run across some sheep, for at this time of the day they'd be likely to be lying down in just such places."

"Yes," said Joe, "that's so; but if they're lying down there, they're looking 'round all the time, and pretty sure to see you before you see them. Then maybe they'll make one jump out of sight, going up the hill, or down, and you don't get a shot."

"Well, then," said Jack, "let's go higher."

"All right," said Joe, "we'll go ahead."

"The climb was steep and rough and hard, but they kept at it for sometime longer, and at last found themselves up above the benches and on a gentle rounded rock slope, where little grass grew. There were no trees or tall weeds.

ALMOST BELOW THEM, FEEDING, WERE TWO GOOD SIZED RAMS."—*Page* 183

"Now," said Joe, "I think we've got to the place. Now we can work along and look down into these ravines, or little basins, or onto the ledges, and maybe if we see sheep we'll be above them and can get to them.".

They followed the ridge down the stream, and in the first ravine that they came to they saw a big drift of snow. They headed that, and as they went on, found that in all the low places on the mountain top there was more or less snow. They had gone more than half a mile when, peering over a crest of rock, they looked down into a pretty little basin in which there was a good deal of snow, but above the snow grew green grass, and almost below them feeding were two good sized rams. The animals did not see them, and they drew back.

"Now, Joe," said Jack, "which of us shall shoot? I guess you'd better, because I don't think you have ever killed a big ram, have you?"

"No," said Joe, "I never killed a ram as big as this, but then I've killed sheep, and I'll have plenty of chances to hunt when maybe you won't. You'd better shoot."

"No," said Jack, "I'd rather have you."

"No," said Joe, "you shoot."

"Well, I tell you," said Jack, "let's toss up for it, the way we did before," and picking up a small flat stone he spat on one side of it, and said, "we'll call the wet side heads. Now, you call," and throwing it up in the air, Joe called "Head" and "tail" came uppermost.

"All right," said Jack, "that settles it." He stepped forward and shot, and Joe stood beside him, ready, in

case Jack should miss. At the crack of the gun the two sheep jumped a little, but did not run away but stood looking in all directions. Jack said to Joe, "Now you give him another," and Joe fired at the sheep Jack had shot at. Almost as the gun cracked, the sheep sank to his knees, and its head fell down. The boys reloaded their guns, and began to pick their way down the rocks to it. The other ram stood until they had approached quite near to it, and then suddenly seeming to become very much frightened, rushed away along the mountain side, and was soon seen climbing the cliff.

They could see that the ram that had fallen was big and fat, and knew that they could not take the whole of the meat into camp with them, and both felt quite sure that they could not bring an animal up here. At least, if they could do so, it would take all day to do it. On turning over the sheep and examining it, they found that the bullet holes made by the two shots were only two inches apart. Both were shots that would have killed the sheep in a few moments. This merely meant that Jack's had not given the animal a shock sufficient to throw it to the ground.

When they had butchered, they found the sheep very fat, and neither Jack nor Joe liked the idea of leaving the greater part of it up here on the mountain to waste. "I'll tell you what we'll do, Jack," said Joe, "let's each of us take one of the shoulders and try to carry that down to camp, and then to-morrow we can come up here with the horses and see if we can get the rest of it down. We can tell as we go home what sort of a trail there will be up here

for a horse. Of course we can't get him up here over these cliffs that we climbed, but maybe by following down the stream that runs out of this basin we can find a horse trail."

When the boys got into camp that night they were both pretty tired. They told Hugh what they had done, and that it was impossible to get a horse up as they had gone. Of course there might be some other way of climbing the hills.

"Well," said Hugh, "now I'll tell you what we'll do to-morrow: we'll take a pack horse, and all of us go up there on foot, and we'll take the horse as far as we can, and when we can't get him any further, why of course we'll have to leave him. Then we can bring the meat down, or most of it, on our backs, and when we get to the horse, put it on him, and so get it all to camp."

"Well, Hugh," said Jack, "let's do that; but I tell you, that sheep is awful heavy. I had all I wanted to carry one of those shoulders down, and of course the hams will be twice as heavy as the shoulders. I don't believe either Joe or I can carry those hams."

"Oh, well, we don't any of us know what we can do until we try. I'd like to stretch my legs on the mountains, and I'll see what we can do toward bringing in the meat to-morrow."

While breakfast was being cooked next morning Hugh told the boys to go out and bring in the dun horse, for he was the stoutest and toughest animal in the bunch, and besides that, Hugh thought him the best climber.

Before starting, Hugh had the boys point out as

nearly as possible the direction from which they had come the night before, and then swinging off down the hill, he worked up on the mountain, the others following close behind. Studying each steep ascent as they approached it over the more or less level bench below, he avoided a number of the rock climbs that the boys had made the day before, and several times led the horse up through ravines where Jack would not have supposed it possible for any animal except a sheep or a deer to pass. Jack noticed, too, Hugh's method of climbing. While he walked briskly across the level and gently sloping country, he climbed steep ascents rather slowly and stopped frequently. The boys, of course, did just as he did, and Jack noticed that he was not nearly so tired or so out of breath as he had been during the climb of the day before.

During one of the rests which they made just after reaching a bench, Jack said, "I wonder why it is, Hugh, that I can climb so much better to-day than I could yesterday. Yesterday I lost my wind all the time, and it took me a long time to get it back. Every time I climbed up one of these steep places, when I got to the top I gave out, and had to throw myself down and pant for a long time before I could go on. I suppose it's because I've been riding so much, and doing but little on foot."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I reckon that has something to do with it; but how did you climb yesterday? Did you hurry on and try to get to the top of each cliff quick, going as fast as you could, and then stop and rest for a long time?"

"Yes, that's the way we did. We wanted to get up to the top as quickly as we could, and see what was over the next hill."

"Well," said Hugh, "that's natural, but I don't think that's the way to climb 'round among the mountains. You get along as fast, and I think easier, if you go more slowly and make frequent stops, but have them short ones. If you go hurrying all the time, you get all blown by the hard work you're doing, and then when you have to stop, you have to stop a long time, and after you've rested for a long time you don't feel much like getting up and going on again; you're all tired out.

"It always seems to me," he went on, "better to climb a little way and then stop and take a few deep breaths, and then go on a little way further, and then stop and breathe again. In that way you are not nearly so tired at any time, and the whole climb is easier for you. I have scrambled 'round considerable in the mountains myself, and that is the way I've learned to climb. You watch through the rest of the day, and see if you don't find it easier on you than it was yesterday."

"I will," said Jack. "It seems a good deal easier so far, but then we haven't climbed anywhere near as steep places as we did yesterday."

"That's another thing you want to learn," said Hugh: "when you're climbing the mountains, try always to pick the easiest road; it's a good deal less trouble to go 'round and take the easy slopes, even if it's twice as long, than it is to buck right against the steep face of a hill. Of course there's lots of places

where there are no easy slopes, and you've got to go up over bad steep sliding shell-rock, and to climb up straight cliffs; but when you can do it, it pays to take the easy ways."

CHAPTER XV

A CHARGING GRIZZLY

THEY were now getting high up in the mountain, and pretty near, Jack thought, to where the sheep was. The horse was still with them, and it astonished Jack to see that Hugh found a means of getting him up or around every cliff or rock slide that they met. At length they were so near the top that, after speaking with Joe about it, Jack told Hugh that he thought they were pretty near the game. One more high cliff should bring them to the little basin in which the sheep lay.

"Well, boys, if you're sure of that," said Hugh, "we'll leave the horse here, and maybe we can pack the meat down to him It's getting to be pretty steep and pretty rocky under foot, I don't want to take him any further than we must."

"Well," said Joe, "I think we're right close now — that it's just over this little bluff ahead of us."

Hugh twisted the horse's rope around a little bush that grew on the hillside, and then turning to Joe said, "Well, Joe, go ahead, and take us up to it." Joe started, and they were soon at the ridge; but just before passing over it, Joe made a motion with his hand, and sank back out of sight, and whispered to Hugh, "There's a bear at the sheep."

"Sure?" said Hugh.

"Sure," said Joe.

"Well, how can we get at him?" asked Jack, who had pushed up beside Hugh.

"The same way we did at the sheep, I guess," said Joe. "It don't look very far from here. You take a look, Hugh. Hugh climbed up, and cautiously raising his head, looked for a few seconds, and lowering it again said, "Well, boys, we've got more than we bargained for; there's two bears there, a big one and a little one. Now, let's go 'round to the left here, and get behind those rocks and a little above them, and then we'll have a chance to look at them and see what we'll do."

They went back down the ravine, and then a little way around and again climbing the rocks, found that they could see the basin in which the sheep lay, and hurrying forward, they soon reached its rim and looked down on the spot.

Sure enough, there were two bears, tearing away at the sheep's carcass, and seeming greatly to enjoy themselves. They looked like mother and cub, and to Jack the mother looked pretty big. They had mauled and partly eaten the fore part of the sheep's carcass, and had dug into its belly, gnawing the flanks.

The cub paid no attention to anything, and was eating greedily, but the larger bear stopped feeding every few moments and looked in all directions. and throwing up her head seemed to snuff the breeze. Fortunately, the wind was blowing from the southeast, and so up the stream, and there was no danger that the

animal would detect the presence of human beings; yet she seemed uneasy, and more or less suspicious.

"Well, boys," said Hugh, "what do you want to do? I expect you want to kill them bears."

"Yes, indeed, Hugh," said Jack, "of course we want to kill them."

"Hide's no good now," said Hugh, "they're in summer coat, and all sunburned, and the winter coat isn't started."

"Oh, Hugh," said Jack, "you don't mean you want to let those bears go. Why look how they've torn our sheep to pieces. Why they ought to be killed for that, if for nothing else."

"Well, well, well," said Hugh, smiling, "you are an unreasonable creature. Do you expect if you leave meat out on the mountain that bears, or wolves, or Indians, or white people either, are going to pass it by and not use it? How do you suppose those bears knew that you were coming back?"

Jack saw that Hugh was making fun of him, and said, "Well, how shall we take them, Hugh?"

"Fix it any way you like. Suppose you take the old bear and Joe the cub; and I won't fire until I have to."

"All right," said Jack, "but wouldn't you rather fire? I've had some hunting, and so has Joe since we've been out, and you haven't had a shot. Wouldn't you like to kill the old bear?"

Hugh laughed again, as he said, "No, I'll give that up to you. You take the old one, and Joe'll take the young one; but I tell you, the young one's hide is better than the old one's."

"Oh, I don't care about that," said Jack. "What do you say, Joe, does that suit you?"

"Yes," said Joe, "it suits me all right."

"All right then, let's shoot at the word; and you count, Hugh; when you say three we'll both fire."

"All right," said Hugh, "get ready. Are you ready?"

Both boys grunted in assent. One, two, three! the two guns cracked at the same instant. The smaller bear fell over, and then sprang to its feet, screaming dismally, and ran along the hillside. The larger one turned her head quickly and bit at the place at which Jack had fired, and then, without a moment's waiting, came rushing toward the spot over which the smoke of the two rifles still hung.

"Hurrah, boys!" said Hugh, with more interest than Jack had ever seen him show. "Here she comes; get ready, and shoot again." The two boys, having reloaded, fired, but both hurriedly, and the bear made no pause, but kept galloping toward them at tremendous speed. She was now within thirty or thirty-five yards, and Hugh, saying, "Scatter out if she keeps a-coming, and keep shooting," raised his rifle to his shoulder and fired; and as he did so, the bear crumpled up and fell to the ground, and after a few struggles, lay still; but for several moments all three stood with loaded guns, waiting to see what she would do.

"She was a tough one," said Hugh, "but I reckon that neither of you boys hit her a second time to do any harm to her. You were a little excited, I guess, and shot before you got your sights rightly drawed. I

tell you when a bear is coming for you, that isn't the time to get excited. If you get excited when a deer or antelope is running away from you, that's all right, but when a bear is coming to you, you want all your wits.

"But what became of your bear, Joe," he continued.

"I don't know," said Joe; "last I saw of him he was going over that ridge, squealing a whole lot. I know just where he went over, and I can go there and look for him."

"Well, you'd better," said Hugh. "But first let's see if there's any life left in this old lady down here." They slowly approached the bear, and threw stones at her, but she did not move. Moreover, much blood was running from her mouth and nostrils, and she was evidently dead. When they turned her over to skin her they saw that she was not a very large bear, but a grizzly. Her coat, as Hugh had said, was not in good order, being faded and sun-burned, and with many thin patches. Still, Jack thought it would be worth taking home with him, and he and Hugh proceeded to skin her, while Joe went off to look for the small one.

"Keep your eyes about you, son," said Hugh, as the boy started. "Even a little bear can scratch and bite a whole lot, if he gets hold of you. If you find the bear lying down, don't go up to him until you're sure either that it is dead or alive; and if it is alive, kill it."

CHAPTER XVI

SOMETHING ABOUT BEARS

As they began to skin the bear, Jack said, "I want to find out why I didn't kill this bear, Hugh; I thought I held all right on it, and yet my shot never seemed to faze her."

"Well, I'll tell you what I think, son. I noticed where she seemed to snap at where you hit her, and I reckon you forgot you were shooting down hill, and shot a little high, and perhaps hit a little far back. Now, when we get her hide off we'll see."

Jack thought for a moment, and then said, "Hugh, I bet you're right. She made a kind of a step to one side just as I was pulling the trigger, and I never thought one thing about holding low because we were above her on the hillside. I guess if we open her we'll find that that shot of mine went nearer her liver than it did her heart."

"Well," said Hugh, "I wouldn't be surprised. Of course the liver is a pretty deadly shot after a while, but it isn't so good as the heart, and, as I've told you I guess more than forty times, it's always better to shoot under than over."

"Well," said Jack, "that was a pretty bad blunder. I feel pretty badly about that. I ought to have

known better than to have done such a thing. I wonder if Joe shot over, too. I hope he'll get his bear, so that we can know about it."

The work of skinning the bear was long and slow, and Hugh said, when they drew the skin out from under the animal, "Now we've got it, it ain't worth anything."

It was found that Jack's ball had struck the bear much too far back, and so that it passed just under the spine, yet not quite high enough to cut the great vein that passes along close beneath the vertebrae. The bear might have lived a number of days, or even have recovered, with this shot alone. The heavy ball from Hugh's rifle had struck her in the back of the neck, and had smashed two of the vertebrae, and lay there flattened in the muscles of the neck. As Jack looked at the wound made by Hugh's ball, and then cut the flattened lead out and held it in his hand, he said, "Well, Hugh, it's mighty sure that you didn't get excited, anyhow. That was an awful good shot, even if it was close, and a mighty hard shot when you think how fast the bear was coming."

"Yes," said Hugh, "of course in a case like that a man's got to figure close. I took the chance of striking her on the top of the head, or breaking her neck, or breaking her back right between the shoulders; but I hit just the place I wanted to hit. I don't hear anything of Joe," he went on; "let's walk over to that ridge and see if we can see him. I'd like to see the trail left by that bear, and maybe call Joe back if he's going too far."

They walked quickly over to the ridge, and had

just reached its top when they saw, a little way below them, the figure of Joe bending over something which they knew must be the bear, and going to him they found that he had nearly finished skinning it; and a few minutes' help by Hugh and Jack completed the job.

"That looks like good meat, Hugh," said Jack. "Is it worth while taking any of it along?"

"Do as you like," said Hugh. "I don't go much on bear meat, myself. I've had to eat it, but then I've had to eat lots of other things that I didn't hanker after. If you like, we can take those hams along. The horse will have all he can carry, with the sheep if any of it is worth taking, and the bear skins. They've mauled that animal a whole lot, I reckon, and it may not be fit to carry to camp." Folding up the little bear skin, Joe put it on his back, while Hugh cut off the hams of the bear, which he said was a yearling, and he and Jack each taking one, they started back to look at the sheep. This was found in bad shape, but the greater part of both hams was uninjured, and cutting these off, and cutting away the part where the bears had gnawed, they were ready to start on their return.

"Jack," said Hugh, do you suppose you can carry both of these little bear hams? If you can, I'll take both the sheep hams, and then come back here and get the bear skin. But one of you boys 'll have to come back to carry my rifle, for I reckon I can't tote both the skin and the gun, at least not without a rope to tie the skin up with."

"I guess we've got to make two trips anyhow,"

said Jack, "there's too much to carry; and anyhow it isn't far."

"No," said Hugh, "it isn't far." The two trips were made, and all the things carried to the edge of the cliff, and then Hugh said: "Now, I'll go and get the horse. I'd rather get him myself, for the smell of the bears 'll maybe scare him, and I may have to fool with him a little. You boys get these things down; get the bear skins down first, and then the meat. We're likely to have some trouble packing that horse. I don't think he'll mind the meat, but the smell of the bear is likely to scare him."

It proved as Hugh had said; the dun made a great fuss when approaching the pile which constituted the hunters' spoils, and after he was close to it it was necessary for Hugh to take off his coat and put it over the animal's head, and tie it there; and then Joe held the horse's rope, while Hugh and Jack packed the load. After the ropes were all tied, Hugh said.

"Now boys, you want, both of you, to get hold of that rope, for I expect when I get this blind off the horse he'll buck plenty, and if he bucks down the hill, he's likely to turn a somersault, and roll, and break his neck before he stops rolling."

The boys, having put their guns well up above the horse on the hillside, took the rope, prepared for anything. As Hugh had said, when the coat was taken from the horse's head he partly turned his head, and giving a frightened snort at the load on his back, began to buck. If he had gotten his head down the hill he would certainly have fallen, but the boys, and

with them Hugh, kept his head from turning down the slope, and he soon tired of bucking, and though once or twice he staggered as if about to fall over, they managed to keep him on his feet. Though he bucked no more that day, he was still much alarmed by what he was carrying, and they were obliged to handle him with great discretion while going down some of the steep places; for, as the load pressed forward toward his neck he would snort loudly, and roll his eyes, as if he felt that he must do something to get rid of the terrifying burden.

They reached camp just before dark, and all were glad to get there. When they stopped before the lodge, Hugh again put his coat over the horse's head until he was unpacked and unsaddled, and when it was taken off, the dun threw head and tail into the air and trotted out to the other horses, looking back and snorting fiercely, showing that his alarm was not yet over.

"Well," said Hugh, "I believe if I had that job to do over again I'd rather carry the stuff down on my own back than fool with that horse. If I'd known we were going to have bear skins to pack, I wouldn't have taken the horse along."

Before doing anything else, Hugh sent the two boys with the axe down into the timber, and told them to get a slender pole, like a lodge pole, and trim it, and bring it up to him. Then resting the ends of the pole on the branches of two trees, about six feet from the ground, he spread the bear hides over it.

After supper that night the talk turned to what they had seen and done that day, and from that to

bears. Jack had many questions to ask about them, some of which Hugh could not answer.

"I thought bears almost always had two cubs," said Jack; "but this one only had one, and that you say is a yearling."

"Well," said Hugh, "they do 'most always have two cubs, and sometimes three, and sometimes four. I've heard of five, but I never saw more than four, and those only once. I expect this old bear started in with two cubs, but that something happened to one of them. You see, when cubs first come out they are pretty small, and lots of things are likely to happen to them. This old she-bear very likely lost one of her cubs when it was a little one. You notice, the one we killed is pretty good size for a yearling, and fat and in good order. I wouldn't be surprised if he'd had all his mother's milk now for over a year, and that's maybe what makes him so fat."

"When are the cubs born?" asked Jack.

"Most people think they're born about the middle of the winter," said Hugh. "I know the Indians think that, and I've had one or two men tell me that they've come across bear dens in winter, and killed the mother, and found the cubs in there mighty small—no bigger than a young pup. Anyhow, by the time they get to travelling round, in May and June, they're still right small, not near so big as old Shep, down at the ranch. They say that if you catch the black-bear cubs when they're right small, they make nice pets for a while; but I never heard of anybody that got very friendly with young grizzlies.

"I remember once, years ago, Joe Kipp had a

couple on the Blackfoot Reservation, that one of the Indians had caught and brought in when they were right small. Joe put collars on them, and then forgot to take them off, and long toward the end of the summer both bears were like to choke to death, the collars were getting so small for them. I helped Joe and Hi Upham take 'em off, one day, and 'twas a regular circus. Those little cubs — they weren't more'n a foot or fifteen inches high — were awful mean, and regularly on the fight. They were hard to catch, too, and if you did get hold of them they'd turn quick as a wink and bite or scratch you. Finally, we cornered one of 'em, and Joe grabbed it by the ears and held it between his legs, while Hi held the forepaws and I loosened the collar; but it came pretty near scratching Joe's overalls to pieces with its hind feet. We did the same thing with the other one. I tell you they were mean little cusses.

"The Indians don't like bears much; ask Joe," continued Hugh.

"No," said Joe, "Indians don't like bears. Afraid of 'em. Bears are powerful medicine, you know, and some people won't speak about a bear, or won't sit down on a bear skin, and of course they won't eat bear meat. There's lots of stories about bears among the Piegans. In old times, you know, bears used to kill lots of Indians; and the Indians had only stone arrows, and couldn't do anything. If a bear took after a man, maybe the man would shoot three or four arrows into him, and they wouldn't much more than go through his hide, and just make him madder and madder all the time, and at last he'd just catch the

man and tear him to pieces. One story my grandfather told me a long time ago, and I heard my uncle tell it again last winter. Would you like to hear it, Jack?"

CHAPTER XVII

THE STORY OF A MAN-KILLER

"YES," said Jack, "this is bully; I'd love to hear it."

"Well," said Joe, "this happened a long time before the white people came. In those days we didn't have any guns. I expect the bears knew that they were stronger and better armed, and they weren't a bit afraid of the people. Often they wouldn't move out of the road if they saw people coming; but the people were always afraid of them and willing to let them alone. Very few men ever killed a bear, and those that had done so were thought brave. It was more to kill a bear than it was to kill two or three of the enemy, and a man who had killed a bear used to string its claws, and make a collar that he wore about his neck.

"In those times we had no horses, and the only animals that we packed, or that hauled the travois, were the dogs; and so the people did not wander far over the prairie as they do to-day; they used to stop in one place for a long time, and did not move camp except for some good reason. You see, the people could pack some of their things on the dogs, but besides that, men and women, and sometimes even the children, had to carry heavy packs on their backs whenever they moved. In those days, a great place

for camping in summer was the valley of Two Medicine Lodge River. You know where it is, Hugh?"

"Yes, I should say so," said Hugh.

"That was a good place. Berries grew there, big and sweet; and along the river were high steep bluffs, over which the hunters used to lead the buffalo, which were killed by falling on the rocks below.

"One summer the people were camped there, as usual. It had been a good summer. All about the lodges, whichever way one looked, you could see only red, the red of meat hanging on the trees and bushes, and scaffolds, drying, above the reach of the dogs; and all over the ground, spread out so thick as to cover almost all the grass, were the skins of buffalo, elk and deer, on which were heaped berries, curing in the sun, to be used during the winter. No wonder the people were happy, and that you could hear laughter and singing all through the camp. They had plenty of food; they feared nothing. No enemies were near at hand; the Stonies of the north, the Kutenais and Flatheads of the west, ran away when the Piegans came in sight; they did not dare to wait to fight them.

"It was a very hot day; there was no wind, and the sun burned down, so that no one could work. The lodge skins were raised, and all the people sat or lay in the shade, some smoking, some talking and others sleeping. Even the little children had stopped playing, and the camp was quiet. Suddenly, at the west end of the village, a great noise was heard, cries and screams, and wailing by women; and from all directions men and women and frightened children began running to the

place, crying to each other, 'What has happened? Who is it that is suffering?' About two women who were seated on the ground a crowd had gathered. These women were mourning and crying and sobbing as they wailed, 'Our husband! our husband! a great bear seized him, and carried him away into the bushes. Oh, we shall never see him again.'

"The chief talked to them; their relations and friends tried to help them, and little by little in broken words the women told what had happened. Early that morning, with their husband, they had gone up the river to pick berries. They had gone far, and the sun had reached the middle by the time they came to the bushes where the berries hung ripe and red. There were so many that it had taken but a little time for them to gather all they wished, and they had started toward home along the game trail which followed the stream. The women were walking ahead, their husband following, and were crossing a grassy opening between two points of trees, when suddenly the husband shouted to them, 'Run, run fast to the nearest trees; a bear is coming.'

"Looking back, they had seen their husband running as fast as he could, and behind him a whitish colored bear, so large that it seemed almost as great as a full grown buffalo bull. Its mouth was wide open, and they could see its long white tusks as it raced over the grass with great jumps. The women dropped their berry sacks and ran as fast as they could. Their husband was now close behind them, and kept urging them on; but fast as they ran, the bear ran faster, and the husband, seeing that it would

soon overtake them, had once more shouted to them to 'run fast,' and then had stopped to face the bear, calling out that he would try to save them. Just as they reached the trees they heard a fierce growl, and looking back saw that the husband had shot an arrow into the bear, but before he could shoot another, the beast was upon him, threw him down, and taking him by the shoulder dragged him to the timber near the river. The women had continued to run, and had come to the camp as fast as they could.

"When they had told their story, a Kutenai woman, a captive, who had learned to speak Blackfoot, spoke and said, 'This bear is surely he whom my people have named Man-eater. He is a great traveler. One summer he may be living in the valley of the Beaverhead, and the next season perhaps he will be found on the Elk River of the north. The Kutenais, the Flatheads, and all the mountain people know him too well. He likes the flesh of human beings better than that of game, and has killed many of us. In vain the hunters have pierced his sides with their sharpest arrows. They cannot harm him, and we think that he possesses some strong medicine, and cannot be killed. Indeed, now they no longer try to kill him, but as soon as he appears, they move camp, and travel a long distance to some other place. Listen to my words: tear down your lodges now, pack the dogs, and move away at once, before he shall kill more of you.'

"That night the chief and all his warriors talked together about all this, and after they had counciled for a long time, they said, 'We are not Kutenais, to

run away from a bear. We will go to hunt this animal, and avenge the death of our friend.' The next day they started, many brave warriors, and when they reached the park they placed some of the strongest and best bowmen at the upper end of the bottom, while the rest went through the timber to drive it toward them. They found the body of their friend, partly eaten, but there was no sign of the bear; he had disappeared. It seemed as if such a large and heavy animal must leave behind him a plain trail of weeds crushed down, grass flattened, deep marks of feet in soft and sandy places; but from where he had eaten that poor man no signs were seen.

"Why did they not listen to the Kutenais woman's words! The very next day, almost at the edge of the camp the great bear killed two women and carried one of them away to feast upon, as he had before done with the man. In the camp the screams of the poor women were plainly heard, but before the men could arm themselves and rush to the place, they were dead.

"Now the whole camp turned out, every man; and making a ring about the point of timber, they all drew toward its center. They moved slowly, carefully, each man with his arrow fixed on the string, and said to each other, 'Surely now this bear will not escape.'

"A thicket of close-set willow stems grew beneath the great cotton-woods, and from a clump of these willows the bear sprang on one of the men, and crushed his head with a single blow of his paw. 'Here he is,' cried those nearby, and they let fly their

arrows into its sides, as the bear stood growling and tearing the dead person; but when the arrows struck him the bear sprang here and there among the men, turning like a whirlwind of fur, while his claws cut and his jaws snapped; and four more men fell to the ground dead or dying. The people all ran away.

"Now there was great sorrow and mourning in the camp. After a little time some of the men ventured back into the timber, and brought away the bodies of their companions; and the women, wrapping them in robes, lashed them on scaffolds in the trees, as was the old way. Then at last they listened to the words of the Kutenai woman. The lodges were pulled down, everything was packed up, and the tribe moved southward, to the banks of the Big River. Six long days they were on the trail, and the man-eater did not trouble them again. Perhaps he did not wish to follow them; perhaps some one of the arrows shot into him had killed him. So the people talked; but the Kutenai woman laughed. 'You may be sure,' she said, 'that he is not dead. The arrow has not been made that will reach his heart. His medicine is strong.'

"All through the winter the people talked of what had happened, and of the camping place under the cliffs of Two Medicine Lodge River. There was no place where it was so easy to kill meat as there, and when spring came they moved back there once more. The day after they had camped, the hunters went out, up and down the valley, and found the buffalo and elk and deer as plenty as ever; but they saw no sign of the great bear.

"The next day the chief's son went out with his mother and sister, to watch for them while they dug roots, and as they were going along, without any warning the great bear sprang from a thicket by the trail, struck the young man before he could draw an arrow, and carried him away without a glance at the women, who stood silent in their fear.

"When the chief was told what had happened, he was almost crazy with anger and sorrow. He ordered all the men in the camp to go with him to the place. But not one of them would go. 'It is useless', they said; 'we are not fools to throw away our lives trying to kill an animal whose medicine is so strong that he cannot be killed with arrows.' The chief begged and threatened them, but no one would go with him to recover the body of his son. All feared the bear. That day camp was broken, and the people once more moved away from the place that they loved best of all their camping grounds. It was no longer theirs. The bear had driven them from it.

"From that day the chief seemed different. Now he no longer laughed and made jokes and invited his friends to feast with him. Instead, he kept by himself, seldom speaking, eating little, often sitting alone in his lodge, and thinking always of the dear son who had been taken from him. One day he took his daughter by the hand, and went out to the center of the camp, and called all the people together. When all had come, he said to them, 'My children, look at this young woman standing by me. Many of you here have tried to marry this daughter, but she has always asked me to allow her to remain unmarried,

and I have always said that she should do as she wished. Listen: I am still mourning for the death of my son. Now, I call the Sun, who looks down upon us, and who hears what I am saying, to hear this: whichever one of all you men that shall go out and kill that bear, to him I will give my daughter for his wife.' Then he turned to the girl, and said to her 'Have I spoken well, my daughter? Do you agree to my words?' The girl looked at him, and then said aloud, 'Since you wish it, I will marry the man who will kill that bear, and will thus wipe away our tears.'

"Then the girl hurried back to her father's lodge.

"All through the camp now the only thing talked about was the offer the chief had made, and the young men were trying to think how it might be possible to kill this bear; yet none of them said that he intended to try to marry the girl, for they all believed that the bear could not be killed.

"There was one young man who, when he heard the words of the chief, was glad. Ravenhead was very poor, he had not a single relation, and as far back as he could remember he had lived as best he could. That means that he had been often hungry, and had worn poor clothing, and had often lain shivering through the winter nights; that he had run errands for every one, and had often been scolded. Now he was grown up; he had gone out to dream for power, and had become a warrior. His dream had been good to him, and in his sleep there had come to him a secret helper, who had promised to aid him in time of danger and of need. For a long time the young man had loved the daughter of the chief, but

he knew that one so poor as he could never hope to marry her. Sometimes when he happened to pass her on the trail, as she was going for water or as she walked through the camp, she seemed to look at him kindly and as if she were asking him something; yet she never spoke to him, but hurried by, and he was always afraid to speak to her; yet sometimes he used to ask himself what her kind looks meant.

"But now, since the chief had spoken, it seemed as if Ravenhead might hope. Those words had rolled away the clouds that hung over him, and if he could only kill the bear, he could marry the girl. He determined that he would kill the bear; some way could be found to do it, he felt sure. Now, for a little while Ravenhead kept by himself, praying, thinking, planning, trying to devise a way by which he might kill the bear, and yet himself not be hurt. Four days passed, and yet in all the camp no one had said that he intended to try to marry the girl. This made Ravenhead glad.

"And there was another thing. For four nights he had dreamed the same dream. In his sleep he saw the picture of a great bear, painted as large as if alive, upon the side of a new lodge. It was painted in black; the long claws, and open jaws, with their great white tusks, showed plainly; and from the mouth ran back the life line, a green band passing from the mouth back to the heart, which was red. Ravenhead was sitting by the river, considering his dream reaching out dimly with his mind for its meaning when suddenly he sprang to his feet as if he had been stung, for all at once there had flashed upon him what

seemed to be the way of success. The dream had shown it to him.

"He turned toward the village, and there, only a step or two away, stood the chief's daughter, holding her water-skin, looking at him as she had looked before. Ravenhead stepped forward and stood near her. Twice he tried to speak, but the words would not come. Then he looked at her, and as she smiled at him, he said, 'I am going to hunt the great bear, and if I return I shall come to you.' The girl dropped the water-skin, and put her arms about his neck, as she said, 'I have tried to make you see, so far as a girl can, that I love you.' They kissed and clung to each other, there by the river; but soon the girl sent him from her, telling him to take courage; to go, and to return safe and successful. When he had gone she stood there by the river, and not able to see before her for the tears which filled her eyes, as she prayed to the Sun to protect the young man.

"Ravenhead travelled for four days before he reached the old camp grounds, near the Two Medicine Lodge cliffs. He had left the village alone; no one but the girl had known his purpose. He came out into the valley, and looked up and down it, seeing nothing except the game, feeding peacefully, and, lashed on their platforms in the branches of the trees, the silent forms that the bear had killed. He wondered if he, too, was to become a prey of this medicine animal.

"All that day Ravenhead walked about the valley, looking for the bear, keeping in the open timber or along its borders, where he could look over the parks

and the slopes of the valley. He did not pass close to the thickets of brush, or to sloughs of tall grass, where the bear might lie hidden. On his back, in case and quiver, were his bow and his arrows; only three of these, for he had been too poor to trade for more, and he would not beg for any. He carried also a pouch of dried meat, that he had killed and roasted the day before, and a little bag of small stones.

"Although he kept looking until dusk, he did not see the bear, and then, building a platform of poles in a tree, he lay down on it and slept. That night, in his dream, he again saw the picture of the bear; and as he was looking at it, his secret helper came to him, and pointing at it said, 'Thick fur, tough hide, hard muscle, and broad ribs may stop the sharpest arrow. The easy way to reach the heart is down through the throat.'

"This was what had come to him so suddenly the day he sat thinking and planning by the riverside back of the village. He did not believe that this bear had powerful medicine, or that he could not be killed. If he only could shoot an arrow down its throat, he believed that he would be successful.

"As soon as day had come, Ravenhead climbed down from the tree, and again began to search for the bear, hopefully now, yet constantly praying to the Sun to grant him success.

"It was yet early in the morning when he saw the great bear, lazily walking across a little park toward the river, and stepping out from the shelter of the timber, Ravenhead shouted to attract its attention. The bear reared up at the sound; then Ravenhead

first saw how great he was; and as the bear stood there on his broad hind feet, he turned his head slowly, this way, that way, smelling the air. Ravenhead waved his robe, and shouted again, calling the bear coward and other bad names; and presently the bear slowly dropped down on all fours and came toward him. The young man had gone out some little distance into the park, but now he began to go back toward the timber, and as he went faster, so did the bear, until both were running very fast, and the bear was gaining. To the young man, looking back, it seemed scarcely to touch the ground; and it drew nearer and nearer, though he was running as fast as he could. Presently, he could hear the bear pant, and just as he did so he reached the foot of the nearest tree. Almost in an instant he was up among the branches, but he was not too soon. The claws of the bear almost grazed his heels, and tore away a great piece of the bark. From the limb on which he sat, Ravenhead, panting for breath, looked down at the bear as it sat at the foot of the tree. The beast was huge, its head monstrous, its eyes little and mean, and from its mouth, in which the long white teeth showed, the foam dripped down over its neck and shoulders.

"The young man drew his bow from its case, and fitted an arrow to the string, and then taking a stone from his sack, threw it down, hitting the bear on the nose. The bear jumped up, growling with rage and pain, and then came a shower of stones, one after another, hitting him on the head, the body, and the paws, and each one hurting. He bit at the places

where they struck, growled, and tore up the ground, and at last rushed to the tree, trying to drag it down, or to climb up it, reaching up as far as he could, in his attempt to seize his tormentor.

"Here was the chance that Ravenhead had been planning for, praying for, waiting for. He bent far over toward the bear, and drawing the arrow to its head, drove it with all his might down the bear's gaping throat. The great jaws shut with a snap, the growl died away to a wheezing cough, and then, after a moment, while the blood streamed from his nose and his lips, the great bear sank back to the ground. His gasping breath came slower and slower, and then, with a long shudder which almost frightened Ravenhead, so strong was it, he died.

"There was great excitement in the village; people running to and fro and calling to one another; women and children standing in groups and pointing to a young man who was entering the camp. Ravenhead had returned, weary, bloody, and dusty, and staggering under the weight of the head and part of the hide of the great bear. The people gathered about him, calling out his name and singing songs of what he had done, and followed him to the door of the chief's lodge, where he threw down the heavy burden. The chief came out, and put his arms about him, and led him inside, and gave him the seat at his left hand. The chief's daughter set food before him; she did not speak, but her face was happy. The young man told the chief how he had killed the bear, and while he was talking, the women hurried to make a sweat lodge

for him, and when it was ready, with the chief and the medicine men, he entered it and took a sweat, purifying his body from the touch of the bear. Then, after the sweat had been taken, and the prayers said, and he had plunged in the river, they all returned to the lodge, just as the sun was setting. The chief pointed to a new lodge, set up near his own. 'There is your home, my son; may you live long and happily.' Ravenhead entered and saw his wife.

"Without, the people were dancing around the scalp of the bear. They were happy, for the death of the bear had wiped away the tears of those whose relations he had killed."

"That's a splendid story, Joe," said Jack. "That's about the best story I ever heard. I wish I could remember it to tell it when I get back east, the way you tell it."

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's a mighty good story, and mighty well told. Who did you hear it from, Joe?"

"I heard it first from Four Bears, and then afterwards I heard my uncle tell it."

"Well," said Hugh, "you told it mighty well, but I don't wonder much, for Four Bears is about the best story teller I ever heard. But you remember it mighty well, and tell it well. It's a right good story.

"Now, boys," he added, "I think to-morrow we'll pack up and go a day or two further down the creek here, and then see what turns up. These horses of ours have filled themselves up pretty well now, and are able to go along all right, and we might as well go on a little further. So, say we pack up to-morrow morning,"

"All right," said the boys, and they went to bed.

CHAPTER XVIII

JACK'S FIRST MOOSE

TRAVEL down the stream next day was easy. The valley widened out, and the hills on either side grew lower. Twice during the march they came to broad meadows, partly overgrown with willows, old beaver meadows, Hugh said; and instead of going through them they went around close to the hills, so as to avoid any possible trouble from miry spots.

After supper that night at camp Hugh said to the boys, "I reckon pretty quick we'll turn off south and follow up some creek, so as to get over to the Divide, and cross down onto Sweetwater. If I ain't mistaken, before we get much further along we'll strike a big stream coming in from the south, and when we do, we've got to turn and follow that up. I've heard tell of a little town off here to the south, but I don't know where it's at, and we don't want to go to it, anyhow."

About noon next day they began to see a wide valley opening up to the south, and Hugh told them that this must be the creek he had been looking for. They did not follow the stream down to where the river from the south joined it, but cutting across southwest, climbed the hill, and journeyed through beautiful green timber in the direction in which they

wished to go. Several times they came on beautiful mountain lakes lying in the timber, and while passing one of these Hugh stopped and pointed to the ground, and when Jack came along he saw there a track which he knew must belong to a moose. He wished that he might get a shot at a moose, and kept his eyes wide open as they journeyed along, but saw nothing. Two or three times during the day they rode near enough to the river they were following up to hear its rushing, and the noise of water-falls, but they could not see them. Hugh did not seem to be following any road at all,—there was not even a game trail,— but he wound in and out among the timber, keeping in the general direction from which the river came. About the middle of the afternoon he turned to the left, and worked down into the valley of the stream, which, though often narrow, sometimes spread out and showed charming little park-like meadows, in one of which they stopped to camp. After camp had been made, the horses attended to, and supper eaten, Jack said to Hugh, "Are there many moose in this country, Hugh?"

"Well," said Hugh, "I don't know exactly what you call many. There used to be plenty here, and I expect if a man was hunting he might run across one once in a while. Of course moose stick close to the timber and the brush, and you don't see them as easily as you do the elk, that feed on the bald hillsides or on the prairie."

"I'd like mighty well to get a shot at one," said Jack.

"Well," said Hugh, "it might be such a thing as

you could do that, but you're not likely to, unless we stop for a day or two to hunt. We can do that most any time now, if we feel like it. We've got over the ridge, and there's no danger of any snow falling, to stop us, but of course it's getting cooler all the time. If you're going to kill an animal for meat you'd better kill a cow. On the other hand, if you want a big head, why of course you'll kill a bull; but the bulls are pretty poor eating now; they were better two weeks ago, just like the elk was. We've got quite a little way to go yet, and of course we've got to have meat to eat; but, on the other hand, we've got the hams of that sheep, and the piece of that little bear, and we're going through a good game country all the way, so that I wouldn't kill anything more until we need it."

"Well, Hugh, we've had lots of hunting; let's not kill anything more until we need it. Maybe there'll be a show down on the Sweetwater to get a moose."

"Well," said Hugh, "maybe there will be; yet this is a better place than that. But we'll be in good moose country for quite a way yet, and maybe you'll get a chance to kill a moose, if you want to very bad."

The stream that they were following up grew smaller and smaller, yet Hugh continued to follow it, and in the same southerly direction. He told the boys that this stream headed in the Divide, between Wind River and Sweetwater, and that when they came to the head of this creek it was only a short distance over to others running into some of the heads of the Sweetwater.

"It ain't far, and it ain't a high climb," he contin-

ued, "and after we strike the Sweetwater, it's a plain trail right down to the Platte, and then across that is home. I don't rightly know how far it is, but I reckon it's not far from two hundred miles."

"That means ten days then, Hugh, does it?"

"Well," said Hugh, "you might call it ten days. Of course that means if we don't have any trouble. If we should get into any difficulties, or lose a horse or two, or something of that kind, it might take us longer."

Three days later they had crossed over the Divide, between the Wind River and Sweetwater drainages, and were making their way through the timber down toward the Sweetwater. Camp had been made early. One of the pack horses had hurt its foot during the day, and had gone lame, and Hugh wanted to rest the animal for a day or two; otherwise it might become so lame that he would have to leave it behind. About the middle of the afternoon, Joe and Jack started out from camp to hunt, Joe taking the hills to the right of the camp, and Jack those to the left.

It was pleasant going through the green timber so quietly as to make no sound, and watching constantly between the tree trunks, to see the motion of any living thing that might appear. There were a few birds in the upper branches of the trees, and now and then a grouse walked out of the way. Jack entered one of those level pieces of forest where the trees stand a little apart and the ground is covered with the pale green stems of the little mountain blueberry, which in fact is not blue in color, but red. This little fruit is very delicious, and a favorite food for birds and beasts.

Jack came to a patch where the berries were thick, and sitting down began to strip them from the stems and eat them. Now and then he could hear the whistle of a meat-hawk, the harsh grating cry of a Clark's crow, and the shrill scream of a hawk that soared far above the forest. Jack thought it most pleasant, and he liked to be there alone and just look about him, and see and listen. It seemed to him a place where at any moment some great animal might step into sight, and begin to feed or to go about any of the operations of its daily life, not knowing that he was there watching and enjoying it all.

And just as these thoughts were passing through his mind, something of this sort happened. It was not a very large animal, but the sight was a pretty one, none the less. He saw the slender stems of the huckleberry bushes shake, thirty or forty yards from him, and the shaking came nearer and nearer, and presently he was able to distinguish that a dozen grouse were coming toward him, feeding on the berries. He sat still, hardly daring to breathe, and before very long the birds were close to him, and in a moment more were all about him. He could see the old hen, larger than all the rest, and with frayed and faded plumage, while the young birds, but little smaller, were much more highly colored,—bright brown and white and bluish. They seemed sociable little creatures, for they were talking all the time, calling to each other much as a flock of young turkeys would call, and seeming uneasy if they became separated. There was one bird that wandered off quite a little to one side, and as the cries of its fellows became

fainter as they passed along, the bird stood very straight, with its head much higher than usual, and erected the feathers of its head and neck so that they stood on end, giving it a very odd appearance. As soon as it had located the brood, the bird smoothed down its feathers and ran quickly toward the others. When the group got to where Jack was sitting, they paid no attention to him whatever. One of them stopped immediately in front of him, and looked carefully at his face, but at once resumed its feeding; and passing on both sides of him, they went on.

Jack did not wish to frighten them, and so turned his head and body very slowly to look after them, and he did it so carefully that the birds were not alarmed, but finally passed out of sight and hearing without being frightened.

This small adventure gave Jack very great pleasure, and he felt as if he had already been well repaid for his walk. Keeping on through the forest, he went down a gentle slope, and presently found himself at the edge of a little meadow, surrounding a very pretty lake. Nothing was to be seen there, and he stepped out of the bushes to go down to the water.

He was going along rather carelessly, holding his rifle in the hollow of his left arm, when from a bunch of willows just before him a huge black animal with horns rushed out, and trotted up the meadow toward the timber. Instantly Jack knew that it was a moose, and throwing his gun to his shoulder, he fired at the animal just before it reached the fringe of willows at the edge of the meadow. It seemed to him that the

creature flinched a little and then went faster, but he could not be sure. What was certain was that it did not fall. Taking up the track, he followed it for some distance through the timber—not a difficult task, for the moose was trotting rapidly and throwing up dirt at every stride. At length, however, he came to a piece of rocky ground, where the tracks were much harder to follow, and presently he lost them and had to circle two or three times to find them, and from that on the work of picking them out was slow. Soon, too, he noticed that it was growing darker, and looking at the sky he concluded that the sun had set. He had a mile or two to go, and as he did not wish to lie out during the night, he reluctantly left the moose track and started back for the camp. He hurried as fast as he could, and made good progress; but after it really got dark it was impossible to go very fast. He did not feel like firing his gun, because that would be as much as to say to the people in the camp that he was lost, and he did not wish to do this. He worked his way along, therefore, keeping toward camp as nearly as he could, but more by guess than anything else, because the trees stood so close that the stars could not be seen. However, the little light that still lingered in the west gave him some idea of direction.

At last the ground began to slope in the direction in which he was going, and before long he saw in the sky the glare of a fire. He made sure that this was the camp, and hurrying along as fast as possible, frequently stumbling over rocks and sticks and occasionally running his face into the twigs of a dry spruce

limb, he at last found himself near the bottom of the hill, and could see the gleam of the fire through the tree-trunks. Before long he was close to camp, and saw that Hugh and Joe had built quite a bonfire in front of the lodge. It was the reflection of this that he had seen in the sky.

As he walked up to the fire, Hugh said, "Well, here you are, eh? We didn't know but you calculated to lie out all night."

"Well," said Jack, "I didn't know but I'd have to do that; but I didn't want to, and so I kept going. I think perhaps I would have stopped and built a fire back in the timber if it hadn't been that I saw your fire, and kept coming."

"What kept you?" said Joe.

"Why, Joe," said Jack, "I saw a moose, the first moose I ever saw; and I had a good shot at it, running nearly straight away from me, and I ought to have killed it, but I didn't. I think I must have hit it; anyhow, I thought I saw it flinch when I shot, and it went through the timber in great shape. I followed the tracks quite a long way; but then it got dark, and I had to give it up and come back.

"I'd like to go out and look for it to-morrow, and I will, too, if we stay here."

"Well," said Hugh, "we'll stay here, all right enough. I want to rest up this horse's foot for a day or two. If I stay here and bathe that horse's foot, and keep him quiet, he's likely to be all right in two or three days. If we make him follow us over these hills now, he may get so that he can't use the foot at all.

"Pity you didn't kill your moose," he continued; "what do you think was the matter?"

"I don't know," said Jack. "I had as good a chance as I ever had at a running animal, but I think maybe I wasn't careful enough, and didn't hold low enough. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if I shot high on him. That seems to be my trouble often."

"Well," said Hugh, "you'd like to go to-morrow and see if you could follow him up and find him. Of course he won't be good for anything if you do find him, but you'll have the satisfaction maybe of knowing that you killed him."

"Won't be good for anything," said Jack; "how do you mean? You don't mean he'll spoil, just lying out for one night."

"Why, son, didn't you know that? Is it possible you've travelled with me all these months and haven't learned that unless you dress an animal as soon as it's killed it's going to spoil? It don't make any difference whether the weather's cold or warm, but if you leave a critter with the entrails in for four or five hours it is no good; the meat gets tainted."

"Well," said Jack, "That's news to me. I never heard that before."

"Oh," said Joe, "everybody knows that."

"Yes," said Jack, "everybody but me."

After Jack had put his gun in the lodge, he brought out the coffee pot and frying pan, and ate some food, and then sat there by the fire, very melancholy, because he had not got his moose.

"He had horns, Hugh," Jack said, "and if I should be able to find him to-morrow, I could bring those in, couldn't I?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "the horns won't be spoiled. It's only that the meat wouldn't be good to eat. Were his horns big?"

"No," said Jack, "I don't think they were very big; they stuck out on both sides. You see, I didn't get much of a look at him, except when he was running away. Then I could see his horns, but I wasn't looking at them; I was trying to pick out the place to shoot, and I didn't pick it out very well."

The next morning Hugh told the boys that they had better go out and see whether they could find the moose, or another one, but warned them to watch the sky, and keep their direction, so that they would be sure to get back. He warned them also to notice carefully, and not get over the Divide. So long as they stayed on this side, the streams running down toward the Sweetwater would always help them to find camp; but if they crossed the Divide and got into the Wind River drainage, then the streams would only confuse them, especially as the timber was thick, and the sky could not be seen, and so the direction could not be told from that. Jack did not attempt to go back to the point where he had lost the moose tracks, but instead kept off to the south, in order to cross the tracks again, and pick them up where they were plain. He felt sure that he and Joe would have no trouble in following them up to the point where the darkness had obliged him to give them up.

They soon found the tracks, and Jack, from his memory of the country passed over the night before, was able to follow them quite rapidly to the place where he had finally left them. Beyond here the

trail was not hard to follow. The timber was thick and the ground damp; there was much moss, and the great hoofs of the moose tore this up, so that the trail was plainly visible; and here Jack had the first confirmation of his belief that he had hit the moose, for Joe called attention to a bush against which the animal had rubbed, and showed on it a little smear of dried blood.

By this time the moose had stopped trotting and was walking; and after a while they saw before them lying on the pale soil, among the tree-trunks, a dark object stretched out, which they presently recognized as the moose. He had lain down here and died as he lay. The body was rigid now and somewhat swollen. Although the moose was not a large one, to Jack he seemed enormous — much taller, longer, and deeper through than an elk, and with a huge ungainly head and a swollen upper lip.

"Well, Jack," said Joe, "what are you going to do now? You killed the moose, and you know it, but we can't take any of the meat. You might come up here and get the horns, if you want to pack them back with you, but it's no use to butcher the animal; you can see for yourself that the meat is spoiled."

"Yes," said Jack, "I suppose it is. I'm awfully sorry; I hate to see a great big lot of meat go to waste like this, but there's nothing to be done now. I ought to have shot better."

"Well, I'll tell you what let's do," said Joe: "let's go back to camp, and catch up our horses, and come up here and get those horns. In fact I guess we may as well bring a pack horse with us. Horns are awful

unhandy things to carry on a saddle, but we can put the head on a pack so that it will ride well."

"Well," said Jack, "we may as well do that, I think," and they rose to go.

"I'll stick a knife in this carcass," said Joe, "and if I do that it will be pleasanter to work about when we get back."

He plunged his knife into the animal's side and there was an outburst of gas; then the two boys went back to the camp.

CHAPTER XIX

WATCHING A BEAR BAIT

"HELLO, Hugh," said Jack, as they walked up to the lodge; "we found the moose."

"Well, you've done pretty well," said Hugh. "I thought maybe he'd go so far, even if you'd hurt him bad, that you wouldn't find him at all."

"No," said Jack, "we found him easily enough. He didn't go very far beyond where I had to leave the trail last night. But it is just as you said; the meat is spoiled; he's no good to eat.

"His horns are not very big, but Joe suggested that we should come back here and get our horses and a pack horse, and go up and bring in the head and horns."

"Why, sure," said Hugh; "why not do that? I expect you'd like to take it home, seeing it's the first moose you ever killed."

"Yes," said Jack, "I should like it."

"Now, I'll tell you what you do," said Hugh. "Do you remember how I cut off that sheep's head?"

"Why, yes," said Jack, "I remember that you cut it off close down to the shoulders, but I don't remember just how you cut the skin."

"Well," said Hugh, "look here now; I'll show you," and sitting down on the ground he drew a little diagram with the stick, explaining to Jack that he

should stick the knife into the moose's head immediately behind the horns, split the skin down on the nape of the neck to the shoulders, then make a cut at right angles to the first one, running down outside of one shoulder, across under the chest, and up outside of the other shoulder. Then, by skinning away from the top of the neck, the hide of the whole neck could be drawn forward; the head cut from the neck where the first vertebrae joins the skull; and afterward, by cutting the skin from where the neck-cut began between the horns, out on each side to each horn and around its base, the whole skin of head and neck could be taken off, and the skull cleaned, with the horns attached to it. Afterwards in mounting, the skin could again be stretched over the skull, so that the head could be hung on the wall.

It did not take the boys long to saddle up their riding horses and a pack animal, and when they were on horseback the distance to the moose was not great. When they reached it they tied their horses, and walked up to the carcass to begin the skinning. But before they did anything, Joe said, "Hold on, Jack! look a-here! There's been a bear here since we've been gone;" and sure enough, the tracks of a middle-sized bear were seen about the carcass, and the hole made by Joe's knife was wet around the edges, as if some animal had been licking it. Jack looked all around, but of course nothing living was to be seen now.

"Now, I tell you what," said Joe; "let's get this head off, and go away, and I wouldn't be surprised if we could come back here to-morrow and get a shot at

a bear. You know, Hugh said we weren't going to move for two or three days, and if that's so, why shouldn't we come back here and watch."

"It isn't a very good place for that, is it?"said Jack, right in here among the timber; we'd have to be close to the moose, and likely enough a bear would see us or smell us, before we could see it."

"That's so," said Joe; "it's a pretty poor place, but before we go we'll look around and see if we can find any way to hide." The boys were somewhat excited at this prospect, and at once set to work to skin the moose head. A long slit was made down through the thick hair on the nape of the neck, back to the shoulders, and then a cross cut down to the moose's chest; then both the boys, getting hold of the head, tried to turn it over, but they were not strong enough to do that. Then they tried to lift the moose's head up in the air, in order to get under it, and to make the cross cut on the other side close to the ground. They did not succeed very well in this either; but finally, after raising the head as high as they could, Joe got a stick and propped it in this position. Then, getting a longer stick they tugged, strained, and kept raising the head higher and higher, until finally the fore part of the shoulder was pretty well exposed. They made the cross cut, but for six or eight inches it was quite ragged. However, they succeeded in completing the cut, and then worked more rapidly, and before very long had the skin off the whole neck and turned so far toward the head that the back of the skull could be seen. Then, Joe cutting down close to the skull so as to sever the ligament of the neck, they twisted

the skull, disjointed the neck, and after that it was a mere matter of cutting through the flesh. After the head had been cut off it was pretty heavy, much more than one boy could lift, besides being unwieldy and hard to handle.

They dragged the head a little way from the moose, and then stood looking at it, for both were a little tired.

"Now, look here, Jack," said Joe, "what's the use of packing all this stuff back to camp; why not finish the job here, and take the skull back pretty clean?"

"Yes," said Jack, "it's a pretty long job, but we've got to do it either here or at the camp, and we might as well do it here. I guess we'd better use our jack-knives to cut around these horns." Sitting down on the ground they did the work of making the cross-cut to the horns, and then they cut round the horns, close up against the burr. The hide was thick and tough, and the blades of the knives were small; but, on the other hand, the knives were sharp, and before very long they had completed this. Then they both worked at skinning the hide down over the head, cutting through the gristle of the ears, and going very carefully about the eyes; and at last, after midday, the skin of the head was free from the skull and was dragged off to one side.

"There," said Joe, "that's a good job, and now we'll cut off all the meat we can from the skull, and pack the horse, and go back to camp. I'm getting hungry. I don't believe this tongue is spoiled; we may as well take that with us." The remaining work

was not long, and lashing the skull on the pack saddle, they set out for camp.

Hugh hailed them, when they got in, with an expression of surprise, saying, "Why, you done the whole job, didn't you? I supposed I'd have an afternoon's work over that head, skinning it out, and cleaning the skull."

"Well," said Jack, "Joe suggested that we should not make two bites of the cherry, so we did the work right there. But, say Hugh, a bear had been 'round that moose, between the time we left it and the time we got back, and Joe says maybe we can get a shot at him. What do you think?"

"Why, I don't know," said Hugh; "maybe you could. What sort of a place is it to wait?"

"Not very good," said Jack; "it's right in the thick timber, and there's no hill, and no hiding-place anywhere nearby. We looked when we were coming away. But I tell you what I think, Hugh; I believe we could go back there, and get up into a tree, and watch from there; then the bear won't be likely to smell us, and maybe we'll be able to get a good shot."

"Yes, that's so," said Hugh; "but there's one bad thing about getting up into a tree: it's awful noisy, and if you move much, the bear's pretty sure to hear you. When did you calculate to watch?"

"Why, I don't know," said Jack; "we were going to ask you. It ought to be either early in the morning or late in the evening, I suppose. That's the time bears come out, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's the time; but in here where they're not much hunted, I suppose maybe they'd feed any time of day.

"I tell you what I believe I'd do," he continued, "we're going to stop here for a day or two more and see if that horse's foot will get better, and suppose you don't do anything now until along about the middle of the day to-morrow; then you can ride up there and see if the bears have been working at the carcass, and if they have, why you can wait there until about dark, and if you don't get a shot you can go back again the next day, right early in the morning."

"Well, let's do that then," said Jack.

"Now," said Hugh, "take your moose-head down to the creek and put it in there to soak and drain, and then this afternoon you can take the brains out and sort of scrape the skull, and after it soaks there for a couple of days it'll be in good shape to dry right up."

The next day, a little before noon, they set out to inspect the bait. As they started out to catch their horses, Hugh told them to drive in old Baldy as well, and that he would ride up there with them and see how the prospect looked.

When they reached the moose they found a great hole torn in its side, and from the tracks around about, it seemed that several bears had been feeding there. The day, though bright at sunrise, had now become overcast and dull, and the air felt like rain or snow. Hugh surveyed the ground about the moose with some care, and finally said to the boys:

"I don't see anything for you to do except to climb up into a couple of these trees; and if I were you I'd watch this afternoon, and if you don't get a shot, quit pretty early, at least before it gets plumb dark, come back to camp, and then try it again early

in the morning. I'll take your horses down here a half a mile, and tie them in that little open park that we passed, where they can feed, but where they'll be far enough away so as not to scare the game. If you don't get a shot, try to get to your horses before it's right dark, and then you can get back to camp all right."

Hugh waited until the boys had climbed the two trees, one a little distance to the north of the moose, the other about as far to the south of the carcass. He told them to cut away all the twigs that were close to them and would rustle if they moved, and advised them that they must keep absolutely still, "for" he said, "there is no animal so shy as a bear, and none that's more careful in coming up to a bait. If a bear comes, don't try to shoot at it too soon, let it come on until it gets right close to you; then shoot as carefully as you know how, and try to kill it dead, for I don't want you to wound a bear, and then go following it through the thick timber and the brush; that's dangerous, and I think foolish."

The hours, after Hugh departed, seemed pretty long to the boys as they sat on their perches. They could not see each other, and of course could not talk. Both were occupied in looking over the ground that they could cover with their eyes, and in listening for any noise. The weather grew colder, and toward the middle of the afternoon flakes of snow began to sift down through the tree-tops. Then they stopped; then began again. There was snow enough to see as it fell, but not enough to show upon the ground.

Joe was glad when he saw the snow, for he believed it would bring the bears out soon; but Jack did not

know this, and thought only of the discomfort of the cold. A little breeze was blowing from the south, and that gave Joe the unpleasant benefit of the odor of the decaying moose meat; but he thought little of that, and sat there and watched. For a long time nothing was seen. Then suddenly, from behind a dead log, fifty or sixty yards from Joe, he saw the head of a black bear rise, and the animal stood there screwing its nose in all directions and snuffing the wind. It remained there for a long time, and then the head drew back and disappeared. Joe's rifle was loaded and cocked. He had fixed himself in as good a position as possible for shooting, and he waited. For a long time nothing happened, and then suddenly the bear appeared, stepping out from behind a tree quite close to him,— not more than thirty or forty yards away — and stood there, looking at first toward the moose, and then slowly turning its head and looking in all directions. It was a black bear, not very large, and yet not by any means a cub. Joe thought the best thing he could do was to shoot it. It stood nearly facing him, and when it turned its head away to the right, he aimed for its chest, just to the right of the bear's left shoulder, and pulled the trigger. The animal gave half a dozen bounds, and then commenced to jump into the air and come down again, and to roll over, and turn somersaults; while Joe kept his eyes rolling in all directions, to see whether there were any others.

The bear's position had been such that Jack had not seen it at all. He was cramped and stiff, cold, tired and hungry by this time; but at the shot he for-

got all his discomforts, and sat watching to see what should happen. For a moment he saw and heard nothing, and then, off to his left, he heard a stick break, once or twice, as if some heavy animal were stepping on it, and then all became silent again. Presently Joe appeared, walking by the moose, and came and stood under the tree in which Jack sat. "Well, Jack," he said, "I've got a bear, and I don't suppose any more will come now. We may as well go over and skin it, and go back to camp."

"How big is it, Joe?" said Jack.

"Well," said Joe, "it's small. It looked pretty big to me when I first saw it looking out through the trees; but when I shot it, and saw it lying on the ground, it didn't seem very big."

Jack scrambled down from the tree, and the two boys went over to the bear. It was not large, but, on the other hand, it was better than no bear at all, and its coat was quite good: not long, but full, and black and glossy, and quite worth having. Jack congratulated Joe, and they set to work to skin the bear.

Joe's shot had been a good one; he had hit exactly in the right place, and the ball had cut the great artery of the heart, and the lungs, so that the bear died almost at once.

The work of skinning the animal took some little time, but it was not nearly dark when Joe, with the skin on his back, and Jack, with one of the hams in his hand, started to go to the horses. The other ham they hung up in a tree. The horses took them speedily to the camp, and they greatly enjoyed their dinner that night. Both boys were tired and were glad to turn in at an early hour.

The next day the whole camp arose late. Hugh reported that the horse's leg was better, and that he thought they might as well move on the next day. "Now," he said, "do you boys want to go up and watch for bear again to-night?"

"I don't know, Hugh," said Jack; "what do you think the chances are? Will any of them come back after one being killed last night?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "I think maybe they might. Of course you can't tell. Maybe they might come back now, or perhaps they'll leave the bait alone for three or four nights, and then come back."

"Well," said Jack, "I'd like to get a shot; but it's paying pretty dear for it to have to sit up in a tree for five or six hours, and pretty nearly freeze to death. I like to be doing something. I wouldn't mind trailing a bear or a deer or a sheep for half a day, but this sitting on a thin branch in the cold, and waiting for a bear to come to you, isn't what it's cracked up to be."

"No," said Hugh, "you're right there. I don't think much of it. However, we might get on our horses about mid-day, and go up and see whether any bears came last night after you left. The carcass 'll show that plain enough."

When they looked at the carcass they found that a number of bears had evidently been there; and not only had they eaten a considerable part of the moose, but they had also partly eaten the bear that Joe had killed the night before.

"Well," said Hugh, "this seems to be a regular bear playground! I've a good mind to come up here

myself to-night, and sit in one of these trees, and see if I can't get a shot. It's quite a while since I've killed a bear, and I sort of need a bear-skin to spread on my bed. What do you say boys, shall we all watch here to-night?"

"Yes, Hugh, let's do that; that'll be great fun,— to see who gets the shot, or whether any bears come."

"Well," said Hugh, "I'm no way certain they'll come; they're awful keen-nosed, and if they should smell that we've been around here during the day, they won't show themselves. Now, I'll tell you what we might do: suppose we go off down to where we're going to leave the horses, and stop there for two or three hours,— nothing will come here very much before sundown,— and then about three o'clock we'll come up here, and you two boys can ride your horses right under the trees you're going to get into, and just climb into them without touching the ground at all; and I'll take the horses back and come up afoot, and get up into my tree. In that way there'll be only one set of tracks for the bears to smell."

Accordingly, about three o'clock they rode back; the boys climbed from their horses directly into the tree: and then Hugh, taking the bridle reins, led the horses back and picketed them in the park. Then he returned, and choosing a tree about half way between the boys, clambered up into it, and they all sat there, patient and still.

The boys watched and waited as carefully as the day before; but nothing happened until, just before sundown, the heavy report of Hugh's gun rang out on the silent air, and a moment later they heard the

branches crackle as he clambered down from the tree. "All right, boys," he called out; "come along."

The boys descended from their branches, and joining Hugh, they all went forward a little way, to a small open spot where a brown bear lay stretched on the ground, with the blood flowing from its nostrils.

"This fellow," said Hugh, "has been fussing 'round in sight for about twenty minutes. He wanted to come awful bad, and yet he was awful scared to. I thought one time that maybe he was going around Jack's way, and so I didn't bother with him; but presently he came back and commenced to go right toward the bait, making little runs forward and then little runs backward, but always getting closer, until finally I made up my mind that I'd have to kill him. Now, Joe," Hugh continued, "you help me skin him, and, Jack, you go and fetch the horses."

Not long after Jack had returned, the skin was off the bear, rolled up and tied behind Hugh's saddle, and they returned to camp.

CHAPTER XX

A PUZZLING TRAIL

THE next morning Hugh put a light load on the lame horse, and they started down the stream. The going was fairly good, through open timber, and at last they came to what Hugh said was the main river, and followed that down. There was a good game trail all the way, and they went pretty fast, but Hugh stopped early because he did not want to tire his cripple. The horse, however, was in good heart and fed eagerly, and Hugh said that it was all right.

For several days their journey down the Sweetwater was without incident. They reached the open country, where there were many antelope, and saw two or three bunches of elk. Several times Jack tried fishing in the river, but without success, as Hugh had prophesied, saying: "You won't find any trout in this stream, nor in any other stream that runs into the North Platte, without they've been put there. There's lot's of trout in the South Platte, and just as soon as you strike the tiny little creeks that run from springs on the other side of the Divide you can catch from them all the small trout you want; but there are none in the North Platte."

"But why is that?" said Jack.

"You can't prove it by me," said Hugh. "I don't know. I've heard tell that the trout in all the streams on this side of the mountains come from the other

side; — that is, that they really belong on the west slope, but that somehow they got over on this side. Now, you take a place like Two Ocean Pass, that we heard about up in the Park, and other places that I have seen like that, where there's a low place on the Divide,—a place that often holds water, and from each end of which a little creek runs down, one going east, the other west. If the trout ran up the creek that goes west into this little pond on the Divide, why it might easy enough be that some of them would run down the creek that runs east. Anyhow, it's a sure thing that there are no trout in any of the North Platte waters that I ever saw, while in the South Platte, and in the Wind River, and the Bighorn, and the Yellowstone, and pretty much all the streams to the north, there are lots of trout. It always seemed queer to me that the North Platte don't have any."

One night in camp, as they were sitting around the fire after supper, Jack said, "Hugh, tell me a bear story. We've seen a lot of bears this trip and killed quite a lot. Were you ever badly scared by a bear? Of course that old bear charged us the other day, but I don't suppose you were scared by it, and I wasn't; but I'd like to know if you were ever really scared by a bear."

"Well," said Hugh, "I reckon I have been. I remember one time that a bear made me run pretty lively for a ways."

"How was it?" said Jack.

"Well," said Hugh, "it wasn't so very long ago, and I was up on the mountains back of the ranch trying to kill some meat. I had left my horse and gone

quite a way without seeing anything, when I came over a ridge and looked down into a piece of timber. About a hundred yards off, lying at the foot of two or three trees, just in the edge of the timber, I saw a kind of a black pile, and for a little while I could not make out what it was. I stopped and looked, and presently a part of the pile got up, and a bear began to walk around, and then another, and then a third got up, and they all walked around the others that were lying there, and looked as if they were snarling and wanted to fight. I saw in a minute that there were too many bears for me to tackle and was just about to back off over the hill and clear out, when one of them saw me and started running toward me as hard as he could. I knew then it was no use to run, and I sort of braced myself, and got a half a dozen cartridges in my hand, and waited until the bear got up within fifteen or twenty steps of me, and then fired at it, and turned and ran as hard as I could. I didn't hear anything following me, and presently looked over my shoulder, and saw that there was nothing in sight; but I kept on running until I got out of wind, and then I went to my horse as quickly as I could. When I had mounted I went back, went round a little way, and rode up over the hill in another place and looked down, and there was nothing alive in sight. I went pretty carefully along the ridge until I got to the place where I had stood, and then I went down to where the bear had been when I shot. There was plenty of blood there, but that was all. Then I went down to the tree and found that these bears — and there must have been a half-dozen of them — had dug

down into the ground under the trees and had been lying there, as a dog sometimes digs in the dirt and lies there to get cool.

"The bears had started off together, but it was hard to tell just what they had done. I followed them for quite a way, and some of them must have left the bunch, for when I got to a big snow-drift — it was toward the end of June, and there were plenty of big drifts that hadn't melted yet — there were only three of the bears together. The snow-drift was hard, and I walked along over it, leading my horse and following the tracks. The horse hardly sank in at all, and my feet made no impression on the snow; but the big bear,—the one that was bleeding,—sank in about six or eight inches every step, while the two others only sank in a half an inch. That must have been a big one. I followed them into the timber, and finally they went into a place where the spruces grew low and so thick that you could not see through them, and there I gave up the trail. I didn't want that bear bad enough to follow him into that place."

"Well, of course you never knew anything more about it than you do now," said Jack.

"No," said Hugh, "I never knew anything about it except what I learned from following the trail. The bear was hit somewhere in the breast or neck or head; he was bleeding from the front part of the body; and I expect the bullet must have knocked him down, or else he would have followed me and likely caught me. But it was about the longest and fastest run that I've made in many a year."

For some days they travelled down the Sweetwater,

having an open easy road and making good progress. They passed the cañon at the mouth of the river where it enters into the Platte, and now felt that they were getting near home.

One morning as they were riding along, Jack noticed the trail of a big bunch of horses, driven fast, going the opposite way from themselves and turning off into the hills to the north. He asked Hugh who would be driving a bunch of horses through that country, and where they were going; but Hugh could not tell him.

"I don't know anybody, son," he said, "who would be taking horses through here, and I don't know where they'd be taking them to, without it's up to some small town north, or up to the new railroad, and then I don't see why they should be coming this way, unless perhaps they wanted to get over on Powder River and follow that down. The railroad, I hear, is pushing west from the Missouri, and it may be that some contractor came down here to get horses. And yet that don't seem right either. These are not work horses,— you can see that from their tracks,— and besides that there are lots of colts with them. If it was a few years back, I should think that a bunch of Indians had gone through; but then there are no travois trails, and I don't know what it is. Might be horse thieves; it's been so the last few years that people are stealing stock some."

The trail came from down the river, and they had followed it for some miles when a dark spot seen on the bottom showed a large animal lying down. Hugh rode over and found it to be a dead horse. He waved to

the boys, who followed him, and they sat there on their horses, looking down at it. The animal had been dead perhaps a day; it lay on its side, and the brand was plainly visible. As Jack looked at the brand he recognized it as his uncle's, and he looked at Hugh in perplexity to see what this could mean. For a time Hugh said nothing, and then getting down from his horse, he looked more closely at the brand, and then, remounting, said to the boys, "We'll camp right here; over in that bunch of timber."

It was but little after mid-day, and Jack knew that something important must have happened, but he asked no questions, waiting for Hugh to speak. After they had unsaddled, and put up the lodge, Hugh told the boys to picket the three riding horses while he got dinner. Jack had told Joe about the brand, and both boys were a gool deal excited, wondering what was coming next.

After they had eaten, Hugh filled his pipe and said: "Now boys, I don't know what all this means, but to me it looks as if a gang of horse thieves had been riding our range and had driven off a bunch of horses, and among them some of ours.

"I know that three-year-old filly lying over there perfectly well. She had her first colt this spring. It looks to me as if she had been run so hard that it killed her. Maybe she got a chance to fill herself up with water, somewhere back. But anyhow, there she is, and she came from the ranch, and what is more, she never was sold to anybody. She's been driven here, and driven so hard that it killed her. Now I am going to find out, if I can, what this means. I am going to see if

I can find this bunch of horses, and see whose they are, and who has got them. If they, or any part of them, belong to us, or came from our country, why we'll get them back if we can. Of course if we can't get them back, why they've got to go on. I don't think there are enough horses in Wyoming to pay for the life of either of you two boys; but if these horses have been stolen I reckon we can get them back, and I am mighty sure we'll try.

"Now, presently, as soon as the horses have eaten, I am going off on the trail of this bunch. I want you boys to stop right here until I come back, and if I should not come back in the course of three days, I want you to go to the ranch and tell them what you've seen. It will be no trouble to get back home. You'll know when you get to Casper or to Fetterman, and you can cross the river most anywhere there, and then it's pretty nearly a straight shoot south. You and me have ridden enough around the country, Jack, so that you know the principal hills, and I'm sure you'll know Rattlesnake Mountain when you see it. You know where the ranch lies from there. You've got plenty of grub, and it's only a little more than two days hard ride to get home.

"But I expect that you'll see me back here about day after to-morrow, in the morning, and then I'll have something to tell you:—either that I haven't found the stock, or else that I have; and what it is; and who it belongs to.

"Now, I want some grub—just some of that dried meat. I won't have a chance to kindle a fire while I'm gone, and I've got to ride pretty fast and can't

carry much. One thing I must have though, and that is your glasses, son."

Jack rose and went into the lodge and brought out his glasses and gave them to Hugh, who opened them, looked at the clasp of the case, and then, shutting it and seeing that the spring was in good order, tied a buckskin string around it. As the sun fell toward the west he sent one of the boys to bring in a horse and said to him, "Let old Baldy stay out there, and fetch the dun; he's stronger, and fatter, and tougher than any of the rest.

"Now, boys," he said, after he had mounted, "this next two or three days will be business; you want to forget you're boys, and think that we may have to do something pretty hard and pretty active before long. Don't go off hunting; don't neglect your horses; stay 'round camp, and keep a good lookout during the daytime. If you see anybody coming, get your horses in close and tie them among the trees. Keep your riding horses on picket all the time, and at night keep them pretty close to the lodge." Then he rode off.

"Well," said Jack, as Hugh's form grew smaller and smaller in the distance, "what do you suppose this means, Joe?"

"I don't know," said Joe, "except what Hugh said. If he finds these horses belong to your uncle, why I expect maybe he'll come back, and we'll have to go up there and kill the man that stole them, and take them back."

"Oh, nonsense, Joe, Hugh didn't mean anything like that. Don't you know, he said there weren't horses enough in Wyoming to pay for our lives? That means that there isn't going to be any fighting."

"Well," said Joe, "maybe then if he finds they're your horses, we'll have to go up there and steal them, and take them back that way."

Jack slapped his thigh with his hand, as he said, "That would be bully, wouldn't it? It would be real fun to steal horses, and have all the excitement of it, and yet know that you were not doing any harm, only getting back your own.

"Well, anyway," he continued, "we've got to look out mighty sharp for things, for whatever Hugh said has got to be done. I remember one time when I failed to do as he told me, and I got the worst scare that I ever had in all my life. That was the time when Hezekiah and young Bear Chief caught me in swimming." Joe grinned appreciatively, as he said, "I heard about that a good many times."

"I suppose you have," said Jack; "that's always been a good joke on me."

CHAPTER XXI

HUGH GOES "ON DISCOVERY"

MEANTIME, Hugh was loping fast up the bottom of the Platte, on the trail of the horses. It seemed to him to have been made the day before; and this would agree very well with the length of time that the mare bearing Mr. Sturgis' brand seemed to have been dead. It was not easy to tell, out here in the open under the hot sun and in the dry wind, just when the tracks had been made.

An hour or two of hard, fast riding brought him to the point where he had come upon the trail that morning, and he could see, looking ahead, that here it turned off and struck in toward the hills, apparently to go up one of two valleys. There was water in both,—not much down here on the dry bottom, but further back in the hills and among the timber he knew that these streams were running brooks, and that on both there were wide grassy meadows and places very likely to be chosen by people driving a bunch of horses, in which to stop and let them feed and rest. If he had been following Indians who had driven off a band of horses that they had stolen from an Indian camp, he would have gone carefully, for Indians would have left behind scouts who, from the top of some high hill, would have watched the back trail for at least a few hours; but he did not think that white men would

do this. He had reason to think that if these were rustlers — horse thieves — they had gone over the range after the horse round-up was over, and gathering these horses, had driven them slowly, perhaps by night, until they had got beyond the last ranch, and then had hurried them along, hoping to get them out of the country without observation.

On the other hand, these might not be horse thieves, but might be people who were driving their own stock in a legitimate way, for some purpose of their own; but he could not understand how this should be, and the presence in the bunch of an animal with Mr. Sturgis' brand made him feel that he must investigate.

The trail led toward the westernmost of the two valleys, and Hugh followed it. The sun was almost down when he got well into the valley, but he could see that the horses were still going fast, and he hurried the dun along, for he was anxious if possible to find the herd that night. It grew dark rapidly, but still he rode on, galloping fast over the grassy bottom, and going more slowly only when he came to the crossings of streams, or to rocky ground, where his horse's hoofs made some noise. Of course the dun, like all the other horses, was unshod, so that there was no clink of iron against stone, to be heard at a distance.

After he had ridden for three or four hours in the dark, he stopped, took off his saddle and bridle, and holding the rope which was about the dun's neck in his hand, let the animal walk about. It took a few bites of grass, and then lay down and rolled three or four times, and then getting up, shook itself. Then

Hugh put the saddle on, re-mounted, and went forward. All the time he was looking and listening as hard as he could. He had gone but a little distance beyond this place, when suddenly he heard the whinney of a little colt, and stopped.

Taking his horse by the bridle he walked forward, and before he had gone very far saw a horse standing near him, and then another, and presently a number of horses, and knew that he was in the midst of the bunch. He took a long look on every side. The valley here was wide, but on either side he could see the black mountains rising, and he did not know just how far the timber came down into the valley. Now he wanted to find where the camp was, and mounting his horse he took a long look up and down the stream on both sides, and there on his right, and not far off, he detected what he thought was the glow of a fire.

Passing on north, until he had gone well above the place where he supposed the camp must be, he tied his horse to a little bush, and then walking over to the edge of the valley, close to the stream, he silently drew nearer to the camp. Before long he was close enough to see the dim light of the fire, and knew that some where near it must be lying the men who had the horses in charge. This was enough for him. He went back, got his horse, and going further up the stream, crossed it, and finding an open place sat down, holding his horse's rope in his hand until the animal had eaten its fill. Then, still on foot, he climbed the mountain, tied up his horse in a thick bunch of brush where it could not be seen, took off the saddle, and after eating some dried meat, went along the mountain

side back to a point opposite the camp, and finding a smooth place, lay down, wrapped himself in his saddle blanket, and went to sleep.

It was still dark when he awoke, but he sat up, stretched himself, and involuntarily felt in his pocket for his pipe, and then smiled a little as he recollected that now he could not smoke. He folded his blanket, and laid it behind the trunk of a tree, and then very slowly began to make his way down the mountain side toward the camp. Before he had gone far, he began to hear the calls of early waking birds, and to be conscious that in the little patches of sky that he saw from time to time the stars were growing paler. He went very slowly and carefully, feeling his way with hands and feet, never brushing against the branch of a tree, or stepping on a stick which might crack. The men in the camp below were probably fast asleep and would not notice the sounds that he might make, but the matter was too important for him to run any risks. After a time it grew lighter, and presently he could hear below him the rattle of the water as it flowed over the stones; and as it grew more and more light, the dim shadows of the horses in the open, and the dark outlines of the bushes on the stream were seen. The mountain side just over the camp was steep and thickly clothed with spruces, most of them of large size, but with many small ones growing among them. If he had himself chosen a place for these men to camp, he could not have selected one that would have been better suited to his purpose. As the light grew stronger, he worked down closer and closer to the camp, until he was as

near it as he dared go. Then he began to look about for a place from which he could see it, for first of all he wished to discover who the men were who had the horses. It might be that this would at once explain the whole matter.

After a little manœuvering he found a place where, through the thin branches of a young spruce, he could look directly down into the camp. There were the ashes of a fire, and not far from it, on the smooth dry grass, were three piles, two of them covered with canvas such as cow punchers commonly use to wrap their beds in, and the other with a gray blanket. He knew that he might now have to wait a long time, and was prepared to exercise patience. He had set his gun on the hillside, against a tree, where it would not fall down, and at the same time would be in easy reach of his hand if he should need it.

He sat there for an hour, occasionally looking at the sleeping men, but for the most part studying through the glasses the horses that fed not far from him.

After the light grew strong but a glance was needed to see that this was not a bunch of work horses, but was range stock, picked up anywhere. He could see the fresh brands on colts and yearlings, and could recognize some of them without his glasses. Through the glasses these fresh brands, many of which had as yet scarcely begun to peel, stood out very plainly, and in many cases the old brand could readily be distinguished. Besides this, there were many horses which he perfectly well knew, without seeing the brands,—animals that he recognized as occupying the range which he was accustomed to ride over. He

chuckled to himself as he saw these, and thought, "My, my, wouldn't Mr. Sturgis and Powell and Joe be hot if they were here;" and then he thought, "I wish they were here, for if they were we could take in these three fellows mighty easy."

From what he had already seen Hugh had made up his mind that this was a bunch of horses stolen from the range about the Swiftwater ranch, but he wished to wait a little longer in order to be sure who the men were who had them.

After a while, one of the heaps that he was looking down upon stirred, and a few moments later the covering was thrown off, and a man sat up.

He rubbed his eyes sleepily, and stretched and yawned, and finally put his hand under the edge of his blanket, pulled out his shoes, and then put them on and stood up. Hugh chuckled as he recognized Red McClusky, a man whom he well knew as living along the railroad. He was a cowboy who had come up from Texas and had worked at odd times on the range, but who spent most of his time in the town, consuming bad whiskey and occasionally disappeared for a few weeks, and then turned up again.

McClusky filled his pipe and lighted it, and then going over to the fireplace, began to kindle a fire, at the same time calling out, "Here, get up, you lazy cusses; the sun's high, and we want to get breakfast." Soon after this the other two men sat up. One of them was Black Jack Dowling, another bad character along the railroad, well known to Hugh; but the third was a boy or young man, whom Hugh did not know, with a pleasant but rather weak face,

who seemed a little bit afraid of both his companions.

Dowling seemed in rather bad temper, and as he walked toward the creek growled at McClusky, asking him why he hadn't let them sleep longer. "We've had an awful hard ride," he said, "and I feel as if I could sleep all day, and all to-morrow too."

"Pshaw," said McClusky, "that's no ride; if you're goin' to let a little pleasure gallop like that tire you out, you'd better stick to holding up trains. I feel as fresh to-day as if I hadn't been in the saddle for a week; don't you, Pete?" he laughed, speaking to the young man.

"Yes," said Pete, "that wasn't no ride. I guess Jack here aint much used to the saddle."

Dowling snarled out "Used to the saddle or not, you don't stir me out of this for two days more."

"Well," said McClusky, "it don't make much difference when we go on, but I want to get these horses up north before snow comes, and we've got quite a ways to go. We ought to leave here to-morrow, sure; anyhow, the day after to-morrow."

The fire was now burning, and operations for breakfast went on. The coffee-pot and frying pan were brought out from beneath the willows; Pete brought some water, and McClusky cooked, while the other two sat by the fire and smoked. Hugh had now seen enough, and began very slowly to work his way up the mountain. It was not long before he was out of sight and hearing of the camp, and taking up his blanket on the way, he went on up the stream. Gradually descending the hill, he at length reached the valley's level, and spent some time in the willow

and alder bushes, studying the horses that were within sight. As nearly as he could figure, there were about a hundred head of horses, and most of them seemed pretty tired. After feeding for some time, they lay down and were seen resting all over the meadow.

Returning to his horse, he led him for a long distance up the stream, to a point where the timber on both sides reached out well into the valley, and here crossing a little open spot, which was almost out of sight of the horses below, he turned down the stream, and keeping himself always well back from the valley in the timber, again stopped opposite the camp. From here, for a time he watched. The men loafed about the camp; but toward the middle of the morning the boy walked out among the horses, and catching one that was evidently picketed, took it back to camp, saddled it, and rode up the stream. He was not gone long, and indeed did not pass out of Hugh's sight. His only purpose was to round up the horses, driving those up stream down opposite the camp, and when he had done that he rode down stream and started the animals that were feeding there up to the others.

Hugh could now make a close estimate of the number of the animals, and after having counted them a number of times, he made up his mind that there were between ninety and a hundred. Of these three seemed to be picketed, and he took careful note of their location, for he had already made up his mind what he intended to do.

After the boy had rounded up the horses he caught a fresh horse, put it on picket and then riding back to the camp, unsaddled and turned loose the horse he had been riding.

CHAPTER XXII

STEALING FROM HORSE THIEVES

HUGH now knew all that he was likely to learn, and starting down stream, still well out of sight in the timber, he kept along the mountain side until the camp had been left two or three miles behind. Then mounting, he passed out into the open valley, and keeping close to its border, rode hard to the Platte River. It was but little after noon when he rode into the Platte bottom, and two hours more brought him in sight of his camp. The boys saw him while he was yet a long way off, and he could see them standing and watching him, and talking together as he approached.

As he rode up to the lodge he said, "Well, boys, here I am. Now, I wish you two would go out and catch up old Baldy and your two riding horses, and bring them in and put them on picket. We've got to pack up, too, before very long, and get ready for a quick move and a long ride. When you get your horses we'll have something to eat, and I'll tell you what's happened."

Hugh unsaddled, filled his pipe, started the fire, and began to cook some food, for by this time he was pretty hungry. While he was cooking, the boys came in and picketed the horses, and then Hugh said to them, "We'd better get our packs together, and

pull down the lodge, and get everything ready for a move. I went up there and found the camp of these fellows. They're horse thieves, all right enough, and they've about a hundred head of horses, most of them Mr. Sturgis', but some are Powell's, and some belong to other neighbors of ours. Of course I could not see the brands on all the horses, but I saw the men that were driving them, and that's enough for me. I don't know, son, if you ever saw Red McClusky or Jack Dowling; but they're the men up there with the horses, with a boy not much older than you two, and I expect they've run 'em off and are going to take 'em up north.

"Now, I figure that we can do one of two things. We can go up there and kill those fellows, and drive the horses back, or we can go up there and steal the horses from them, and leave them afoot, and just take the horses back on the range.

"I feel some like killing the thieves, but I don't want you boys to be mixed up in anything of that kind; it might be bad for you. I reckon the best thing we can do will be to go up and steal the horses; steal 'em all if we can, so as to leave them fellows afoot. But if they've got sand to follow us, why then we've got to fight; because I know mighty well that they've no right to this property."

The boys said nothing for a time, but when Hugh spoke of stealing the horses they looked at each other and grinned, with a delight that they could not conceal.

"What are you fellows laughing at?" said Hugh, when he saw them. "This ain't no joke; this is serious business."

"That's so, Hugh," said Jack, "but I guess we were both laughing because Joe suggested that if these were horse thieves, the best thing we could do would be to go and steal the horses."

"Well," said Hugh, "I reckon that's what we've got to do; but I do hope that we can get 'em all. Now, to do that, we've each one of us got to do his part, and to do it the best way we know how. I'd rather have done it last night than do it to-night, because last night those fellows were tired, and to-night they'll sleep lighter; they may hear the horses walking off; but all the same, I don't believe they will. Now, you boys better saddle your horses, and we'll make up the packs and put 'em all together here, and put hobbles on the pack animals, so that there'll be no time lost in catching them, when we come back. You see, if we have to stop here it'll take quite a time to pack, and if we leave any horses up there for those fellows to ride, they may follow us for a way, and there's no saying what may happen. I don't want either of you boys to get shot, and I'm sure I don't want to get shot myself."

After the meal was eaten, the packs were quickly made up, the pack horses were driven in, caught and hobbled, and the afternoon was not half gone when the three were riding back up the valley.

Jack and Joe were somewhat impatient, but Hugh checked them. "There's no hurry," he said, "we can't do anything till the middle of the night. Those fellows may sit up round the fire for quite a while, and they might notice if the horses were moving much. I am in hopes that Joe and I can go up there

afoot, and cut loose their riding horses, and then just slowly and quietly shove the whole bunch down until we get them well below the camp, and then we can start them at a good gait. There'll be no trouble about keeping them going fast, for we've got plenty of riding horses in the bunch there, and we can change often."

The sun had not set when they entered the valley. They followed it up for what seemed to the boys a long distance, but at length Hugh stopped and dismounted, saying, "The camp is only about a mile above here."

It was now dark night. Hugh sat down on the ground, holding his horse's bridle, and began to fill his pipe, and the boys sat close to him.

"Now," he said, "I am going to take you boys up just where I came down this morning, and we'll get around these horses at the upper end of the valley, and work them down slowly on the other side from the camp. I'll go over and cut loose the horses that are picketed, and then we'll work on slowly until we get down well below this. Then we can go. I don't want either of you boys to shoot unless you have to; and if you have to, I'd rather have you shoot not to kill, but to cripple. If you get a chance, shoot at the man's shoulder, so he can't use his gun. On the other hand, I've heard that Dowling is handy with a gun in either hand. We've got to take some chances, of course. I don't expect we'll see anything of those fellows without we leave them a horse or two. If we do that, why then to-morrow morning they'll come on. You boys keep right close after me, and try to make as little noise as you can. Don't let your

horses call. They may want to when they smell the others, but keep them from doing it if you can."

Keeping well to the left, and close in under the timber, Hugh rode slowly along, and after a time they saw the light of the fire flickering on the other side of the valley, and occasionally could see shadows passing in front of it. As they moved along, they saw, from time to time, horses feeding, and once rode close to an old mare, whose little colt, not seeing them until they were near, gave a great bound into the air and rushed away for a few yards.

Hugh kept on up the valley until it narrowed, going almost to the point where he had crossed in the morning. Then he stopped and said to the boys:

"Now get off your horses and lead them. I reckon we're above all the horses, and now we'll go back down stream. Keep on the side away from the camp; keep spread out some; and when you come to any horses just walk toward them and get them to move along slowly. I'll keep out toward the middle until we get down near the camp; then, if the fire's gone down, I'll try to cut loose the horses, and I'll try to push them and all the others down the stream. It may take longer than we think, and you boys when you get down where we went into the timber, on the way up, get off your horses and lie down on the ground together and wait. See that you don't make any noise; see that you don't shoot me; keep your wits about you; and don't get excited or scared." The boys listened without a word.

"Now," Hugh continued, "we'll start. Jack, you go over next to the timber, but keep fairly well out

from the edge, and try to see all the time that you don't miss any of the horses. Joe, you keep out nearer the middle, and get all the horses you can, and both of you work as slow and careful as you know how."

The three separated and set about their task. To Jack it seemed sort of shivery work, being off there alone. He wondered if anything would happen to Hugh or Joe; whether the thieves would find out what was being done, and would attack them; whether Hugh and Joe would meet him down at the end of the valley, and what in the world he would do if they did not. He had not much time for thoughts like these, however, for he had to watch the sky-line of the timber, and to figure how far he was from it; to look out for horses in front of him, and to travel along without stumbling, or running into little low bushes, or doing anything that would make a noise.

Before long he saw his first horse, an old mare with a colt. He walked toward her, and as he approached, she began slowly to walk away. Then there were other horses off to his right and to his left, and he walked back and forward across the valley, sometimes seeing that the horses to his left were moving slowly along down the valley, which told him that Joe was doing his work, sometimes coming to a large bunch of brush, around which he had to pass in order to be sure that no horses were hidden there. All the time he kept a good lookout across the valley, to see if he could see the fire of the camp, and at length, after he had gone, as it seemed, a very long way, he recognized, under the opposite hills, a dim glow on the

bushes, which told him of a fire burned down. This he was glad to see, because it made him feel sure that the thieves had gone to bed and were asleep.

By this time he had in front of him a good many horses, all going quietly and feeding as they went. Now and then two or three would lag behind, and he was obliged to cross over and walk behind them, but they at once started on, and Jack felt pretty sure that, so far as his side of the valley was concerned, the horses had all been gathered. As he approached the place where they had entered the timber he began to hope that before long he would see Joe; and it was not very long after that that he saw one horse lagging behind all the rest, and as he went over to drive it along, he saw that someone was walking by it, and knew that this must be Joe. He wanted to go over and speak to him, but remembering that he had his own horses to look after, he restrained himself and kept on down the valley. At the same time he was glad to be sure that Joe was close by. Now, if only Hugh would appear, he should feel that they were all right. Now the valley grew more and more narrow, and the boys were closer together, and presently, as the horses bunched up to pass through a narrow place between two points of timber, Jack and Joe were almost side by side.

"Everything all right, Joe?" said Jack.

"All right," said Joe. "We've got a good bunch of horses."

"Have you seen anything of Hugh?" said Jack.

"No," said Joe, "I ain't seen Hugh, but the horses off to my left are moving along; I reckon he's there

somewhere." The words were hardly spoken when suddenly, apparently from a horse that was walking just in front of them, Hugh's voice said:

"All right, boys; I believe we've done the trick. I think we can mount now and go ahead. Don't start 'em up yet, we'll go two or three miles further, and then we'll let 'em sail." Both boys were delighted to hear Hugh, and they mounted and crowded close to him.

"O Hugh," said Jack, "do you think we got 'em all?"

"Well," said Hugh, "I don't know about that, we've got the most of 'em. They may have riding horses cached in the brush somewhere. I was afraid to go right close to the camp, for fear some of 'em might be awake; but I got two picketed horses; there may be one hidden somewhere else; but I don't believe they've got horses enough to ride to-morrow, and I'm almighty sure they haven't got horses enough to catch us."

"What time is it, Hugh, do you think?" said Jack.

"Well, I don't know," said Hugh, "but it's considerable after the middle of the night. We've got plenty of time to get these horses down to camp, and pack, and start the whole outfit on before it gets day; and pretty soon I'm going to begin to hurry 'em. I want you two boys to drive the horses, and when we get out of the valley, I'm going to ride round them, and go ahead of them and lead them. Keep them going well until you hear me whoop; or if you can't hear me, until you see me. I shall ride pretty hard until we get near the camp, but we must stop the

horses before we get there; otherwise they'll frighten our pack animals, and we won't be able to catch them. Now," said Hugh, as they came to a little enlargement of the valley, "I'll go ahead, and you give me a few minutes to get around them, and then start them up. When I hear them beginning to gallop, I'll go just ahead of them, and they'll all follow me."

The cavalcade proceeded at a walk for ten minutes more, and then Joe and Jack began to hurry the animals, and before long they were galloping at a good rate of speed down the valley. When they reached the Platte bottom the horses turned off, following the trail by which they had come up, and swung steadily along at a good gait. Now and then Jack recognized, even in the darkness, a place that they had passed before, but for the most part the country all looked strange to him. It seemed as if they had been going for a long time when he thought he heard a faint whoop from in front, and at the same moment Joe called out to him:

"Hold on, Jack; drop back. Hugh called, and we must let the horses stop."

They drew their horses into a walk, and before long the animals they were driving also slowed down. Then, after a little while they heard Hugh, not far in front of them, calling out:

"Come round here, boys, and help catch the pack animals, and put the packs on."

They rode through the horses, which had now stopped and begun to feed, and it took but a short time to catch their pack horses, and saddle and pack up. Then turning loose the packs, they all three rode round behind the herd, and started it on again.

CHAPTER XXIII

"DIED WITH HIS BOOTS ON"

IT was now growing light, and they drove the horses hard. Hugh rode steadily behind the bunch, while the boys were out on either flank, keeping them straight, and not permitting any lagging. Once they stopped for a little while and caught three fresh horses which Hugh pointed out, put their saddles on them and turned loose their own horses.

The morning passed, and it was now the middle of the afternoon. The boys had noticed that Hugh often turned about and looked back up the level valley, and they themselves were also watching the back trail to see whether there was any pursuit. The sun was getting low, when far back up the valley was seen a speck of dust, which gradually grew larger, and underneath it they could see a black spot that was constantly growing nearer and nearer. It was evidently a man on horseback. After they had watched it for some time, Hugh motioned both boys to come over toward him, and riding there side by side in the thick dust kicked up by the hurrying herd, Hugh said to them:

"Boys, there's one man coming, and he's on a good horse, and we've got to kill him, I expect. Let these horses stop now, and catch up three other animals

and change the packs onto them, and by that time this fellow will be close up to us, and we can see what he wants."

They slowed down their horses, the willing herd stopped and began to feed.

Jack and Joe rode through it, and one by one caught the pack horses, which they brought back to Hugh. Then Hugh, sitting on his horse, pointed out to them other animals to catch, and they roped them, brought them up, and one by one the packs were transferred to the new horses. The horses did not like it very much, and one or two of them bucked, and to Jack it seemed rather nervous work to be doing this when the approaching horseman kept growing larger and larger, and when, for all he knew, before long bullets would be flying. The work was finished before the horseman was near them, and then Hugh told the boys to start the herd on again. But Jack demurred, and said:

"Hold on, Hugh; are you going to stay here and meet this man? I think we all ought to stay, because something may happen."

"Well," said Hugh, "I don't like the idea of your stopping. I'd rather have you go on and start these horses. Nothing's going to happen to me; I feel pretty sure of that. I shall be on the ground, and have every advantage over this fellow, if he wants trouble."

"Hugh," said Joe, "how will this do: suppose Jack gets off twenty steps one side of you and I get off twenty steps on the other, and we won't do anything unless it looks like you were going to get hurt; then we can shoot."

"All right," said Hugh, "if it will make you boys feel any easier; but I tell you nothing is going to happen. If that fellow don't stop when he gets within good rifle shot I'll stop him, and I won't hurt him either. If he's got so much sand that he won't know when a man's got the drop on him, I may have to hurt him, but I don't look to."

The man came on; his horse was a great powerful beast and had been ridden hard, for it was covered with dust and foam. When he got within a hundred yards, Hugh dismounted, and stepping out in front of his horse, raised his rifle to his shoulder, and pointed it at the man. The man paid no attention to the motion, save to put his hand behind him and jerk from his holster a six-shooter. He called out something as he came on, but they could not distinguish what he said.

"Hands up!" Hugh called; but the man paid no attention, and the distance between the party and the rider grew smaller.

"Hands up!" Hugh shouted again, and then a third time; and still the man came on. Hugh fired, and the horse plunged forward on his knees throwing the rider far before him. It was Dowling.

He struck on his head and hands and slid a little way along the earth, and then springing to his feet, with his left hand he pulled another six-shooter from his belt; but as he raised it, Hugh's rifle sounded again, and the man fell.

"Look out for him, boys! Don't go near him; he's like a grizzly bear; likely to be playing possum." Hugh watched the man with a wary eye, and was not

"'HANDS UP!' HUGH CALLED." *Page 268*

surprised to see him after a moment raise himself on one elbow and feel about over the ground, in the effort to recover the pistol which he had dropped. Hugh had seen it fall, and knowing the man's quickness with the pistol, watched him carefully. In a moment, however, the man sank back and seemed to be breathing hard, and Hugh called to the boys:

"Watch him, now, and I'll step up to him and get that gun; I'll be ready for him if he moves."

Hugh stepped carefully but quickly forward, with his gun ready, and had almost reached the man, when he moved slightly, and Hugh sprang swiftly to one side, as the pistol was discharged without being raised. In a moment Hugh was on the man, and had taken the arm from him and thrown it to one side.

Dowling was badly wounded, and it was evident he could not live long. When his pistols had been secured they did what they could to make him comfortable. Joe went to the river and brought water in his hat, and after a little, Dowling opened his eyes and spoke.

"Well, you've got me," he said; "I was in hopes I'd get you. I couldn't stand it to have those horses taken, but I wish you'd taken this one, instead of leaving it for me to ride. However, we made a good try to get the stock, and we would have got it if it hadn't been for you. Where did you come from? We never saw anything of you."

"We were just travelling down the river," said Hugh, "and saw the tracks, and I knew there wasn't any reason for a bunch of horses to be driven through this country; so I went back to look up and see what it meant, and I found that you'd got our horses."

"Well," said Dowling, "a fool for luck! Anybody else coming through the country wouldn't have paid any attention to that horse trail, but you just had to do it.

"I reckon I've got it," he went on; "and I expect it's about time too, but I hate almightily to be downed by an old man. I'd a heap sight rather have had one of them young fellows kill me."

"Well," said Hugh, "I expect when a man's time comes, it don't make much difference how he gets killed."

"No," said Dowling, "I expect maybe it don't. I always allowed I die with my boots on, anyhow, and here I am."

During the few moments that had elapsed since he had received his wound his voice had grown much weaker. He was not bleeding much, but Hugh shook his head as he looked at the wound.

"Have some more water, Dowling?" he said.

"Yes, a little," said Dowling; but as Hugh raised him up to drink, he began to choke, and in a moment, after a shudder or two, lay dead.

"Well, boys," said Hugh, "we've got to bury him, and then move along. Suppose you two go over onto the edge of that bluff and scrape away the clay, as much as you can with your knives, and I'll bring the body over, and put his saddle-blanket over him, and we'll cover him up."

It had all happened so quickly, and there had been so much excitement about it, that Jack hardly understood or realized what had happened. He and Joe walked over to the bluff, and scraping away the soft

yellow clay, soon made a place six or eight feet long, and presently Hugh came over, carrying the man on his shoulder, and they laid him in his shallow grave. Hugh took off his belt, and looked through his pockets to see if he had any papers by which he might be identified, but found none. They covered him with the earth, and brought flat stones that had fallen down from the top of the bluff, and piled them upon the grave, to protect it from the wolves.

Then Hugh went back, and picking up the two pistols that Dowling had dropped, shoved them in the holsters, and holding out the belt to Jack, he said, "You want to wear this, son?"

"Why, yes, Hugh, I'd like to have it to remember this day by, though there are some things that I don't much care to remember."

"Well," said Hugh, "this is the way things used to be in the far west, but I thought we'd about got through with it by this time. However, some of the old spirit seems to crop out now and then."

They mounted, and started the herd along again. They had not gone far before Hugh said, "I want you boys to drive these animals on three or four miles down the creek, and leave them there; but cut out the pack horses, and we'll camp right here."

Camp was made in a bunch of cottonwood brush, but the lodge was not put up. The pack horses were hobbled, and then the boys drove the loose horses some distance further down the stream, and returning found the camp dark, but supper ready.

"I thought," said Hugh, "that there was just a chance that those two other fellows might follow us

down and try to take some of the horses back again; so we had better stop here, without any fire, and with the horses kept close, and make an early start in the morning."

Hugh had them up long before day. They built no fire, but ate some dried meat, and started on. The tired horses were found just where they had been left, were pushed along at a good gait all day and crossed the Platte; and the next night they drove them into Mr. Sturgis' ranch to the great astonishment of all there, and later of Powell, and the other men from whom horses had been stolen.

Great was the credit received by all three of those who had brought back the stolen horses. Mr. Sturgis gave to Jack and Joe each three good riding animals; and to this day Jack talks of the only horse stealing expedition he was ever on.